



## AN IDEAL CHURCH.



# AN IDEAL CHURCH

## AND OTHER SERMONS

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THOMAS MITCHELL,  
PRIMITIVE METHODIST PUBLISHING HOUSE,  
48-50, ALDESGATE STREET, LONDON, E.C.

PRINTED BY  
THOMAS DANKS & SONS,  
4, CRANE COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.

## P R E F A C E.

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THE first volume of “The Primitive Pulpit,” consisting of Thirty-seven Sermons by representative ministers of the Connexion, was issued as long ago as 1857. Few, indeed, of those who contributed to that volume are still spared to us. It is felt that it is time, and more than time, that a volume of similar character should be given to the Connexion—a volume that may be regarded as fairly representative of the Primitive Methodist Pulpit of to-day. Should the present work be favourably received, it will, in due time, be followed by a companion volume, for which ample material is available.

Three honoured brethren of the Bible Christian Church have each contributed a sermon to the present volume, in which pleasing fact we may see evidence of the friendly relations existing between the sister Churches.

H. B. KENDALL, B.A., *Editor.*

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## AN IDEAL CHURCH.

BY REV. JAMES JACKSON,

*President of the Primitive Methodist Conference.*

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“Now they which were scattered abroad, upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch,” etc.—ACTS xi. 19-24.

THE account which St. Luke gives of the Christian Community at Antioch, furnishes an interesting picture of an Ideal Church. Originating through persecution, it was made up of the best material, and from the first gave evidence of possessing a vigorous and robust life. There were in it, in active operation, all the human elements necessary to its success as an evangelising agency; such as, sympathy, devotion and self-sacrifice; and it achieved a distinction, which gave to its history an interest and permanence which few churches can claim. To it belongs the threefold honour of being:—The mother church of the Gentiles; The first to recognise and act on the world-wide mission of Christ; the first to give to His followers the name by which they are known to all the world to-day—“for the disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.”

Let me indicate two or three features of this Church

which lay at the root of its success, and entitle it to be regarded as an Ideal Church.

### I. IT WAS COSMOPOLITAN IN CHARACTER.

The speciality of this feature may not be very obvious to the churches of to-day. For are they not all of this character, and is it not the intention of the Divine Founder of the church, that it shall, in all its sections, embrace the whole world in its mission? Although such is the purpose of Christ, up to the time when this Church was founded in Antioch, it had not been recognised. Somehow, the first Church of Jerusalem, although in the most definite terms charged with the sublimest and most benevolent mission, and with infinite resources for its execution at its command, failed to rise to such a conception of Christ's meaning. On the contrary it rapidly sank into one of the narrowest and most exclusive of sects, and addressed its gospel message to the Jews only. The first followers of our Lord were Jews, and though expecting a Messiah, and acknowledging Christ to be that Messiah, they regarded Him as all their own, and His coming as exclusively in the interests of the Jews and such as might become Jews, as proselytes. They did not deny that Gentiles might be benefited or blessed through Him, but this possibility was conditioned by their becoming Jews. In other words, "they must bow to the yoke of Moses before they could reach the liberty of Christ." This was the great mistake of the mother church of Jerusalem, and seriously impaired its power and usefulness. The opening of the doors of their Church to the Gentiles by the disciples at Antioch was, therefore, a new departure of infinite importance to the progress of Christianity.

It is not unlikely, as the Church in Jerusalem was made up of two distinct types of Jews—natives of Palestine, and Jews foreign-born, distinguished in the text as men of Cyprus and Cyrene—that there would be divided opinion and feeling in the Church, on the attitude it took on this matter. The Jews from Cyprus and Cyrene were men of broader minds and wider knowledge. Contact with the Greek populations of those regions, and the Grecian education they had themselves received, saved them to a large extent from the prejudices of their brethren of Palestine; hence, while they bowed to these prejudices, they might have misgivings as to their policy, and longings after a greater liberty of action and a wider diffusion of the gospel than had ever entered the minds of their Apostolic leaders. That this was so appears, I think, in the powerful address delivered by Stephen, in which he recalls and re-proclaims the forgotten teachings of Christ, which affirmed the supercession of Judaism by the universal Church that He should establish, wherein its richest promises of blessing should receive their fulfilment. This outspokenness of the deacon precipitated a crisis, when the policy of compromise between the disciples of Jesus and the adherents of the old faith was ended, and a persecution of the general body of believers, fierce and relentless, broke out. The bold and faithful Stephen was basely murdered, and the Church was scattered—its members thrown adrift as sheep without a shepherd. Here I am reminded of the well-known saying:—“The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church,” a saying which is strikingly true, as the results of this terrible persecution testify. The Church was “scattered,” and its members went forth to

seek a fresh settlement. They went forth, not in despair, but as men who rejoiced in a new-found liberty, some of them travelling as far as Antioch.

On reaching this city the historian tells us:—"They spake unto the Greeks also (R.V.), preaching the Lord Jesus," and he adds a significant observation, an observation which was intended, no doubt, to call attention to the Divine ratification of their action: "And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord."

Here was the Lord's approval of this wider diffusion of His word, and inferentially a rebuke of the attempt that was being made at the same time by certain Palestinian Jews, to perpetuate the old limitations, as well as of any future attempt that might be made to impose restrictions on the free communication of Christ's message of salvation to the world. To these fugitives of Cyprus and Cyrene we are indebted for a liberated gospel. They lifted the cross out of the encumbering ritual of Judaism, and proclaimed to all men, irrespective of nationality or moral condition, salvation through a crucified but living Christ, and their preaching was to them that believed, whether Jews or Greeks—"Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." Their action opened a new era of religious privilege and power to the world, under which we have the happiness of living to-day.

## II. IT WAS HEROICALLY AGGRESSIVE.

To some minds there may seem to have been very little of the heroic in the conduct of these followers of Christ, as they fled before their persecutors. But flight does not necessarily mean cowardice; it may be, and often is

the dictate of duty. Persecution may open the way to wider usefulness, and to refuse to enter it, and under a false notion of duty to choose death, may be very brave, but it may at the same time be quixotic and criminal. Jesus, on one occasion said to His disciples, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another," and obedience to this injunction was manifestly their duty at this time. Antioch was the place which offered them the advantages they sought. Was not the hand of God in this opening? Antioch was a mighty city, with a vast population, made up of people from all parts of the world, and of every nationality—Jews as well as Gentiles; and here the Jews were allowed the observance of their religion without interference. Jerusalem had proved itself, by its narrowness and anti-Gentile prejudices, unsuitable as a base or centre of Christian evangelism. Antioch, free from this embarrassment, offered every facility for the prosecution of such service. To this place these wanderers made their way, and that they were divinely led in this matter subsequent history fully demonstrates. The flight of these people was, therefore, no cowardly shirking of duty, but a Divine movement of greatest moment. They left Jerusalem not as a faithless panic-stricken crowd, but as pioneers of a holy cause, and the preachers of a faith that should ere long conquer the world. They carried with them their love to Christ, and did not fail to give voice to their convictions as to the scope and meaning of His mission, for they were found everywhere preaching the Lord Jesus.

Antioch was the goal they aimed at. Let us not suppose that this new departure made no demand on their courage and fortitude. The reverse of this was the case.

They were going to a strange city, where their cause would be as unpopular as it was in Judea, and which, though tolerant to the Jews, had nothing in common with these fugitives either as to sentiment or conviction. Antioch was a centre of idolatry and a cesspool of moral impurity of the foulest kind ; and though not disposed to persecute by physical violence, it was scurrilous in its criticisms, and fond of stigmatising with reproachful epithets those who excited its contempt, a fact to which Christ's followers could bear witness. In addition to these natural difficulties, they were sure of the bitterest opposition of their own countrymen resident in the city, of whom there was a great number. Their mission bristled with difficulties, to face which and overcome, would test their courage to its utmost point. They did not die with Stephen, and thus win the martyr's crown in that form, but they were martyrs nevertheless. There are two ways in which a man may be a martyr. A martyr is a witness, and you may be a witness for the truth concerning Christ by suffering for Him as Stephen did, or you may be a witness by proclaiming and propagating the truth which you believe about Him, and in this latter form you may suffer as much, nay, more, than the man who loses his life at the fiery stake, in a life-long suffering in obedience to conscience and the call of God. This was the form in which these despised Nazarenes exhibited the martyr spirit. They went forth with their lives in their hands, and there can be no doubt as to the heroism which moved and sustained them in their adventurous work. The same heroism, thank God, still survives and is exhibited by devoted men and women, who at the call of the Church go to some regions of the Foreign Mission

field;—a heroism as true and self-sacrificing as was ever displayed in the arena at Rome, or in the fires of Smithfield. With a noble and heroic Christian devotion these persecuted ones hastened to Antioch, and not knowing how their message would be received, opened their commission,—not in some obscure corner of the city, but tradition tells us, in Singon Street, right under the shadow of the Pantheon temple—the very centre of its superstitions and sensualities. With a holy daring, audacity if you like, they began their work in this stronghold of heathen impurity and Jewish Pharisaism, and such results followed as stirred the whole city as it had never been stirred before. A mighty work of God broke out—another church, on a new foundation of liberty, was founded,—a church which took the world for its sphere of operation, and salvation for all men as its motto. A church full of life and power, the result of its aggressive energy and faith in God, and which became the focal point of Christian activity and direction, and for centuries influenced the progress and establishment of Christianity in many parts of the world.

### III. IT WAS EVANGELISTIC IN METHOD.

An evangelist has been defined as one who publishes glad tidings,—a messenger or promulgator of good news. It is supposed that in the early church there was an order of preachers called evangelists,—men having no settled pastorate or official status, but working under the direction of the Apostles, as missionaries, and sent to open new places, or to assist feeble churches,—itinerant preachers. The term used as descriptive of the service rendered by these fugitives, and ultimate residents in

Antioch, must not be confounded with the services rendered by the agents I have referred to, but must be understood as representing the action of individual Christians or believers, not under official orders, but in response to their own sense of responsibility to the Master, and as the outgrowth of a gracious spiritual experience. It is acknowledged by most Biblical critics that these people were simply private Christians, the ordinary unofficial members of the Church at Jerusalem. They were private Christians, but in the sense I have indicated they were evangelists, they told the story of salvation through Jesus Christ to their fellow-men as opportunity offered, and were eminently successful in making converts and planting churches. They did not, as one says, preach formal sermons as preachers are expected to do now, they simply, as the text says, "spake the word." They did then as individual Christians should do now, told the story of salvation, "and the hand of the Lord was with them," etc.

That there must be a specially appointed ministry, an order of men set apart, as overseers, or guardians of the interests of religion, and leaders of religious thought and activity, few will deny. But to affirm or assume that persons so set apart, are the only persons who shall preach the gospel or impart religious instruction, is a grievous error, alike inconsistent with the genius of Christianity, opposed to the commands of Christ, and to that sense of obligation which the consciousness of personal salvation ever brings with it. Such a ministry does not and cannot supersede individual service, hence private Christians are no more at liberty, by reason of the appointment of such a ministry, to neglect

their obligations in this particular, than the ministry is to neglect the duties peculiar to it. As in an army, to use a military illustration, there are officers and men of the rank and file, and as no battle was ever won by the orders of the officers, apart from the co-operation of the private soldier, and the crack of the rifle all along the line, it follows that in his sphere the private soldier is as truly commissioned as are the officers under whom he fights. In Christ's conflict with sin, each saved individual is a soldier, and his activity or idleness will, to a greater or less extent, affect the tide of battle, and help on or delay the final victory.

Individual personal service in propagating "the faith," in publishing the "good tidings" of salvation through Christ Jesus, was the dominant feature of this Church at Antioch, and the secret of its success.

Churches of evangelists in this sense, whose entire brotherhood is made up of those who, having received the Lord Jesus themselves, will pass on the message of His love to others, are the churches we need to-day.

Only by such an agency can we cover the field of our operations. As compared with the world's vast population, what are the few official representatives of Christianity—the ministry? An insignificant body, totally inadequate to the world's spiritual needs. Looking at them as the converting agencies of the church, well may we say, "The fields are white unto the harvest, but the labourers are few." Supplement this agency, however, by the rank and file of the churches, liberate the mighty pent-up spiritual forces which there lie dormant, and direct them in a holy crusade against sin, and to the diffusion of the gospel of the Son of God, and

the progress of Christianity will be accelerated by a momentum of immeasurable strength, which will speedily bring into view the day when the kingdoms of the world will become the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

#### IV IT WAS LOYAL TO ITS CONVICTIONS, BUT TOLERANT AND CHRISTLY IN SPIRIT.

The circumstances which led to the formation of this Church, and the utter absence of human design and pre-arrangement in reference to it, point distinctly to the action of Divine Providence. That a conviction had been wrought in many minds, that Christ's work must have a wider application than was being given to it by the Church in Jerusalem, may be fairly assumed, and that Providence pointed to Antioch as the place where this wider application could be given to it with greatest effect, there can be no doubt. However, to this place these fugitives made their way, and as we have seen, formed a church, after their ideal as to what the Church of Christ should be—a refuge and home to men who yearned for spiritual life and liberty without distinction, a privilege eagerly seized by vast numbers of earnest souls—for as the narrative tells us, “A great number believed and turned to the Lord.”

The central principles of this Church were—A free salvation to all the world through Jesus Christ, and equal rights of fellowship and communion to all who received Christ as their Saviour, and were loyal to Him as their Leader and Lord, without the imposition of a burdensome and effete ritualism.

This new church could not be allowed to work out its

ideal unchallenged. It came into collision with the old theocratic idea of divine manifestation and indwelling, and changed the whole aspect and relationship of Christianity. The Jews had hitherto enjoyed a monopoly of spiritual privilege which neither the adherents of the old faith nor the apostles of the Church of Christ in Jerusalem were prepared to surrender. Hence this new church was opposed from two quarters, from one of which better things might have been expected. The Jews of the old faith, as we have seen, fought this movement in its initial stages, as instance the persecution and dispersion, and the Judaizing disciples resisted it, as it took shape in the infant cause at Antioch. Its first trouble from this quarter arose out of a complaint which had been sent to the Church at Jerusalem by some conservative ceremonialist, probably in reference to the disregard in the new church of the ancient order and its general irregularities as touching its services and teaching. This was settled in the interests of the young church by the wise and sympathetic action of Barnabas, a broad-minded, devout Cyprian Jew, sent from Jerusalem to investigate the case, who so much approved of the movement, and was so satisfied it was of God, that he remained at Antioch, joined its ranks, and co-operated in its services. Some years after this incident, another and more determined attempt was made by certain Jews from Jerusalem to re-impose the old ceremonialism—serious trouble in the church was the result—by appealing to the fears of these earnest souls, saying, “ Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.” Barnabas and Paul had much difficulty in calming their fears, which could only be permanently ac-

complished by themselves and several others going specially to Jerusalem, and taking the decision of the Church council there on the matter. This was done, and resulted again in victory for the Church at Antioch—a victory which settled for ever the independence of the Church of Christ of Judaism, and its right to determine for itself its order of service and ritual. See the letter sent from the Mother Church, which contains its decision on the subject, *Acts*, chap. xv. vv. 24-29. Here was the first great triumph of Free Church principles, which represent the right of individual churches to fix their own order of services and method of worship.

In the controversies in which this Church was involved, there were displayed by the parties concerned, a Christian demeanour and dignity of the highest character, which dissipated all suspicion of disloyalty to Christ which might have possessed the mind of the Apostles.

There was no desire on the part of the Antiochian Church to set up a separate organisation, independent of the central authority. All it wanted and insisted on was that it should be allowed to go as God should lead it, and to regulate its own internal affairs.

The Mother Church rose to the occasion and acquiesced in its request, which to the joy of all, saved Christianity from the scandal of a divided church. The final settlement of these difficulties furnishes a fine illustration of the spirit in which divided opinion in the church on matters of form should be dealt with,—a spirit of tolerance and brotherly kindness.

The results of this new departure warn us on the one hand of the dangers of the sacerdotalism of the present,

time which aims at the imposition of a priestly ceremonial, interfering with the free access of individual souls to God, and practically teaches that salvation is only possible through certain forms administered by a special order of men. There are those to-day who do not hesitate to take this position, and to do their utmost to inculcate its vicious doctrines. If we value our Christian liberty, we must not be asleep as to the danger that lies in this quarter, or we may have to fight the battles of the Reformation over again.

On the other hand, they warn us against the imposition of stereotyped cast-iron church regulations, which may unduly interfere with individual liberty, or make it difficult if not impossible to follow the leadings of Providence. This is a danger which lies in the track of all churches.

There is a tendency in all churches to officialism, to slavery to organisation, making individual movement and initiative almost impossible. Let us be on our guard here, otherwise we may suppress an element of service which is essential to church growth and expansion. The history of the origin and early successes of our own church, and of all great life-diffusing religious movements admonishes us to guard against the subtle influence of what is called church order. Let us not make it impossible for men of the type of the Wesleys, the Bournes, and the Cloweses, to find a home and sphere of service amongst us, or we may lose much spiritual power and usefulness. Had some of the churches been more tolerant in this direction, we should have had fewer sects, but a stronger church.

I confess I have never been able to regard the manifold

divisions of the church as part of the plan of its Divine Founder. As our Divine Lord left no instructions as to order in church government, I assume that each church was left to follow that order which it found most suitable to its circumstances, and yet keeping the unity of the Spirit toward all of the common faith. Hence I cannot but regard the cause of division in many cases, with the bitterness which it has often excited, as the result of an exaggerated importance being attached to mere matters of polity and procedure.

Thanks to the improved spirit of the times danger in this direction is less acute now than in the past. The churches are beginning to understand each other better, and to discern that the power of Christianity lies not in the form in which it is presented, but in its truth, with the result that less importance is attached to the points of procedure which separate them, while their general doctrinal agreement is drawing them closer together, a process which we trust will continue until for purposes of highest service they will become practically one. In this direction we may find much encouragement and help from a study of the origin and procedure of the Church at Antioch, which in some important respects, was truly An Ideal Church.

## THE VICTORY OF FAITH.

BY REV. J. WATSON, D.D.

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“For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world : and this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith. And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ?”—1 JOHN v. 4-5. (R.V.)

ADDRESSING in an earlier passage the young men who were strong, and in whom the Word of God was abiding, John says: “Ye have overcome the evil one.” This mastery of the devil has in our text for its equivalent the mastery of the world. The devil and the world are essentially the same hostile power. He is “the ruler of this world ;” in him the world-principle, which makes the creature the supreme end of life, was first embodied, and by him it was implanted in the hearts of men. Hence John makes now the devil and now the world the great adversary of Christ and His people.

The realisation of the fact that we are contending against a great personal foe, vigilant and active, and who is bent on doing us harm, is necessary to keep us watching unto prayer. “Be sober, be watchful ; your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour ” (1 Peter v. 8). But it is still more necessary for us to know that we can only encounter him amid the evil influences of the world,

and those desires of our own hearts to which his temptations appeal.

I. THE WORLD, THEN, IS OUR IMMEDIATE AND VISIBLE FOE.—Here is the battle-field, and within and around us is our adversary. But how is the world our enemy? Considered in itself, the world is that system or order of things in the midst of which we live, the human beings with whom we associate, the entire circle of secular business, pursuit and pleasure. With the world as God made it His children can have no quarrel. In the world of sense there is no essential evil. The glory of the heavens, the grandeur of the mountains, the beauties of field and forest, and the loveliness of the human face divine, are revealings of the beauty and glory of their Maker. The relations of social life have been instituted by Him; capacity for business and taste for pleasure are His gifts. That matter is evil in itself, with which mere contact is defiling, is a false idea from which sprang one of the greatest heresies in the ancient Church, a pagan idea grafted on the faith of Christ. Asceticism, monastic seclusion from society, the practice, so bewildering to the moral sense of the young, of denouncing many things as evil which are not evil, of cursing what the Lord has not cursed, are the fruits of this pernicious Gnostic plant. This ascetic view of the world is altogether alien from the example of the Son of Man, who came eating and drinking, who cheered the marriage feast at Cana with His presence, and sat down to meat with publicans and sinners. He distinguished between the world and the evil of which it had become the home. “I pray not that Thou

shouldest take them from the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil one." Why, then, should we regard the world as our adversary ?

(1) *Because of its relation to the unseen spirit of evil.*—The agency of this personal adversary, who makes the world the instrument of his temptations, is markedly brought out in many places by the Revised Version. In several passages, notably in the Lord's Prayer, where the abstract term "evil" was used by the Authorised Version, we have "the evil one." In John this personal element in the Christian conflict is especially prominent. "The whole world lieth in the evil one." The protagonists are the Son of God and the devil. Jesus Christ has founded a kingdom in which the will of the Father is to be supreme, the subjects of which are those who keep it in the spirit of love. But the world stands over against it as a hostile kingdom, under the prince of darkness. Through him the world has been perverted from its original purposes, as the revelation of God and the home of His children, and is now the seat of those temptations by which Satan influences men to disobey the commands of God. The world stands between them and God, demanding of them the love which is His rightful due.

The narrative of man's original trial is of abiding significance, because in its essential parts it still confronts every child of man. What was the moral task presented to the first man but that of deciding by a free choice between the world and God ? There in the midst of a garden was a tree, the symbol of the world, "good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise." Over against the tempting

world was God's prohibition, "Thou shalt not eat of it." Will man make the world or God, the seen or the unseen, his chief good? The devil tempted him to put the world in the place of God, to worship the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever, and how well he succeeded the history of the world shows. The devil still plies men with the same temptations as those by which Adam was overcome. There ensues in every life substantially the same conflict. Corresponding to the original prohibition is the law of Christ, as John presents it: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vain-glory of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (Ch. ii. 15-16.) The Son of God is calling men by His Word and Spirit to a life of faith. But the world, and the devil behind it, is ever pressing itself upon men's senses, exciting by its vain shows imagination and passion, whispering lying words of promise in their ear, investing the things of the world with a halo as attractive as it is unreal. The spirit that is in the world is a spirit of falsehood. How many of the young and inexperienced are drawn into the vortices of sin by its allurements! How many are led astray by its false promises, as the first man was deceived by the devil's lies! With an adversary so malignant and crafty, armed, as he is, with the powers of this world, even the children of God need continually to watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation.

(2.) *Because of the innate bent of man's nature to the*

*world.*—Man has, in consequence of his lapsed condition, an inborn tendency to the seen and temporal. Overcome by the world, he is enslaved by the world. In the very core of his nature he is of the world. This is matter of uniform experience. Everywhere his drift is to the world. This is revealed in the faith and worship of Pagan nations, their religious instincts seeking satisfaction mostly in the seen ; it is seen in the sensuality, covetousness, and low ambitions of the mass of men in Christian lands, and the facility with which young people take the broad road of worldly pleasure. This downward tendency, checking their heavenly aspirations, indisposing them to divine fellowship, and maiming their entire spiritual activity, is constantly deplored in the confessions of godly men. “My soul cleaveth to the dust ; quicken Thou me according to Thy word.” The seductive charm which the world exercises upon us comes from ourselves. The world within us is ready to respond to the temptations of the world without. “The desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the vain-glory of life, are not of the Father, but of the world.” Although these desires are excited through the flesh and gratified by the flesh, they have their seat in the soul. Worldliness, in all its forms, consists in a life of inner fellowship with the world. The world is no mere external foe that we can meet with the full force of our heart and will ; it has entrenched itself within us, and must be conquered before God can have the supreme seat in our hearts.

(3) *Because the social life of the world is penetrated with the spirit of evil.*—The stress which John lays upon the world was, Bishop Westcott thinks, probably

due to the position then held by the Roman Emperor, "which gave a distinctness to the conception of the world which it is very difficult for us to realise. 'The world' was not then an abstraction, but, to take an obvious illustration, the most definite power which received worship at Ephesus in the time of St. John.

In the Emperor 'the world' found a personal embodiment, and claimed divine honour." This consecration of the earthly was the dominant form of life, the sin of the age, to which Christians must not be conformed.

Rom. xii. 2. The tendency of the evil operating in the world has ever been to take certain social forms, to strengthen itself by association. Sometimes it is legalised, as the drink-traffic is now-a-days, and as impurity has striven to be. The world gains immensely in tempting power through social custom, habits, and maxims. The gin-palaces, with their flaring lights, standing at every street-corner, as if they were the crown of our civilisation, the race-course, with its accompaniments of book-making and betting, the gambling-hells and brothels, the sweating-shops, grinding the life out of the poor and weak, reflect the vices of our age, its drunkenness, sensuality, and greed of gold, as well as its excessive love of amusement. Moral and religious reformers anticipate a brighter day, when, social life being constructed on a Christian basis, it will be easier for men to be good than it is now. But that day is apparently still a long way off. Social life as at present organised and operating is, on the whole, no friend to goodness. Antagonism to the world is the inevitable lot of an earnest Christian. "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but now ye are not of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

II. THE POWER BY WHICH WE ARE TO GAIN THE VICTORY OVER THE WORLD IS FAITH. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

(1) *Faith is the very opposite of the power which operates in the world.* It is variously represented in the New Testament, but each representation of it sets it in opposition to the world. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews regards it as spiritual vision, a realising sense of the unseen. It brings the powers of the invisible world to bear on this. It is "the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen." The man of faith stands amid the world as a witness for unseen things. With Paul faith is pre-eminently trust, the object of which is the living God who gives us all things richly to enjoy ; it is practically the yielding up of a man's self to Jesus Christ for life and salvation. John's concept of faith does not essentially differ from these. His usual phrase is "to believe in," or "on the Son." It contains also the idea of mystic union and fellowship. To believe in Christ is equivalent to abiding in Him. "Abide in Him" is John's favourite expression, having for its counterpart His abiding in us. As worldliness is inner fellowship with the world, so faith is inner fellowship with Jesus Christ. In faith the human unites itself to the divine. Man in his weakness, powerless to resist the world and the devil, allies himself to the Almighty Son of God, and through Christ gains the victory. Faith is not simply the instrument of victory ; it is the victory itself. As soon as a man through Christ becomes the organ of spiritual power he has gained the victory ; the world is even then beneath his feet.

The 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews sets before us a host of witnesses to the conquering power of faith. It was always over some form of the world—its wealth, honour, or ease ; its opposition, hatred, or persecutions—that faith achieved the victory. By faith Abraham looked for the heavenly city. By faith Moses accounted the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. Neither the attractions of the court nor fear of the King's wrath could move him from his purpose ; for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible. In John's own time the power of faith had been displayed by a host of martyrs for Christ, some of whom had been tortured, not accepting deliverance at the price of truth and duty, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Whilst in Jesus Christ Himself faith had been exhibited in its highest power, so that He could be pointed to as “the Captain and Perfecter of faith.” Even against the Roman empire, the embodiment of this world's power, faith had again and again proved victorious. And faith in Christ is still a militant and conquering power. The business man who prefers loss in the competition of the world rather than defile his conscience, conquers the world by faith. The young man or young woman who dares to confess Christ before a scoffing world bears witness to the power of faith.

(2) *This faith is the fruit of the new birth.*—“For whatsoever is begotten of God overcometh the world.” There is a faith which goes before and is the instrument of regeneration, the faith of a sinner trusting in the Saviour. But this conquering faith is manifested within the Christian life, and is the sign and evidence of being

born of God. With Peter, "the living hope" of God's child is the result of regeneration ; in like manner John regards the faith which overcomes the world as implanted by the new birth. The natural man has no such power ; for it is not intellect or genius, but a spiritual endowment. Neither is it that strength of will or purpose which some men possess in a wonderful degree without renewal, but the power of the Holy Ghost operating through the soul of the believer, making even the weak strong. This faith is the infallible sign and manifestation of a divine life, a life originating in the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. Unless a man is born again he is an utter stranger to the life of faith. He cannot even say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost, much less fight and conquer in His strength. That a man may master the world and the devil there must enter into him by regeneration the divine power of Christ. Christ must be formed in his heart. "Ye must be born again."

(3) *This is more especially faith in Jesus, the Son of God.*—"And who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ?" A mere theistic faith, a faith in God as the Creator and moral Governor of the world, is not enough for spiritual victory. Conquering faith is centred in Christ ; it recognises and confesses Him to be the Son of God, with all that this Sonship implies. As the principle of the Christian life it is more fully explicated in Paul's words : "That life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me." Gal. ii. 20. "Who is he that overcometh the world ; etc., " is a challenge to

all deniers of Christ. Let them produce any who can overcome the world save the man who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. It excludes from the honour and the blessedness of victory all who reject Jesus Christ. The rejection of Him involves the refusal of all divine power, since He is the only medium through which it comes to man. But it is also an appeal to the experience of all who confess Him. They are conscious of victory over the world through Christ; they are more than conquerors through His love. Once the slaves of sense, they are now free. "By whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world."

Faith in Jesus, the Son of God, is not only the admission of a divine truth of fundamental significance, it is the principle of union with Christ Himself. It finds in Him, and in His words and work, all spiritual strength. It accepts Him and trusts in Him as the Redeemer of man from every hostile power; in Him who came to deliver us from this present evil world, who seeing us entangled by falsehood and sin, the slaves of sense, came to our help, breaking, when we turned to Him, our chains asunder. We owe everything to Him. The child of God now looks to Him as the Leader and Consummator of Faith. Faith sees how He overcame the world on His people's behalf. The conflict was waged by Him on a narrow battle-field, and but for a short time, but His victory was decisive. "Now is the judgment of this world; now is the prince of this world cast out." The victory which He gained was not only for Himself, but for all who should hereafter trust in Him. In the din and peril of our strife we hear Him saying, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

Safety, victory, triumph for every believer is assured by His victory, consummated on the cross. Our great Captain will lead us to God's right hand, if we keep by His side. His own hands will crown us; His throne will be ours. "He that overcometh I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne."



## CHRIST AND THE SCRIPTURES.

BY REV. F. W. BOURNE,

*(Bible Christian).*

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“Search the Scriptures ; for in them ye think ye have eternal life : and they are they which testify of Me. And ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life.”—JOHN v. 39, 40. (A.V.)

“Ye search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life ; and these are they which bear witness of Me ; and ye will not come to Me, that ye may have life.” (R.V.)

Is it “Search the Scriptures,” or “Ye search the Scriptures”? Did our Saviour on this memorable occasion issue a command, or declare a fact? The text in the Authorised Version is good sense, it is in strict agreement with the prophet’s words (Isa. xxxiv. 16), and it is believed to be the true reading by a host of eminent scholars. But it is nearly fifty years ago (and long before I knew that there was an old English version of the text, translated from the Latin of Erasmus, which substantially agrees with our Revised Version), that I had, with proverbial youthful ignorance and presumption, under the guidance, however, of a life-long friend, himself no mean scholar, reached the conclusion, that the whole scope of the context seemed to demand the *indicative* rather than the *imperative* mood, and the clause, “for in them ye think ye have eternal life,” every one must perceive, follows much more naturally upon an *assertion*

than a *precept*. The trend of the more exact and profound scholarship of the present day is in the same direction. We may then, with ample reason, assume that the Saviour readily acknowledged that the Jews did in some way or other, stimulated by the hope of finding eternal life, *search* the Scriptures; that He emphasized, in the most striking way, the important fact, that these Jewish Scriptures testified of Him—not simply testified of Him, as Creation bears testimony to its God, but were given for that express purpose—“*They are they which testify of Me* ;” and yet, either because they were blinded by prejudice or full of bitter hatred, they refused to come to Him—though “the true God and the eternal life,” and having the very blessing to bestow which they were seeking—“that they might have life.” We may therefore, with some measure of confidence, assume that we are on the right track, in directing attention—

First, to the Saviour’s qualified commendation of the conduct of the Jews—“*Ye search the Scriptures* ;” secondly, to His remarkable testimony concerning the Scriptures and Himself—“*they are they which testify of Me* ;” and, thirdly, to His condemnation of the Jews in refusing to come to Him that they might have life.

1. The Saviour’s *qualified* commendation. *Qualified*, for His *condemnation* of their conduct may be regarded as more severe than His commendation of them was hearty. He here first approves, as elsewhere and always, whomsoever, and wheresoever, and whatsoever, what He justly can, before he condemns. The Jews searched the Scriptures, which had been given them for “a light to their feet, and a lamp to their path.”

“*The Scriptures*.” Elsewhere our Saviour called them

“the Law,” “the Law and the Prophets,” “Moses and the Prophets,” “your Law,” and, in one memorable instance “the wisdom of God.” By the Scriptures the Saviour meant the Old Testament (which the Apostle Paul says are “able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus”) as it had come down to and was in use by the men of His day, with its triple division of the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. To the Scriptures He Himself constantly appealed, its authority He was ever ready to acknowledge, and its various enactments and provisions He “came not to destroy, but to fulfil.” It is the most complete revelation of God which we have, an infallible record of His doings, and, at the same time, the charter of human liberty, the anchor of man’s stedfast hope, and his one safe rule of life and conduct.

When we speak of “the Scriptures,” we include the New Testament as well as the Old. If the Old Testament is a veritable fountain of wisdom (Psalm cxix. 98), sweeter than honey, and more precious than fine gold, what less can be said of the later Revelation than that it is the eternal wisdom of God, inexpressible in its sweetness, and of inexhaustible value. We have in the New Testament not simply types and prophecies concerning the Saviour, but the Saviour Himself. The Old Testament is the foundation, the New is the superstructure built on it. Augustine says, “The New is latent in the Old, the Old is patent in the New.” The Redemption expounded in the epistle to the Romans is the counterpart of the Fall recorded in Genesis. The epistle to the Hebrews is but the unfolding of the deep spiritual meaning of the Book of Leviticus. The facts recorded

in the Gospels are the literal fulfilment of the predictions of the great Evangelical Prophet. The Old Testament is more than the scaffolding to the building, it is a part of the Temple of Revelation itself. The germ of truth in the Old Testament expands in the New into the blade of living green and the ear of golden corn. Ye *search* the Scriptures. The Saviour employs the same expressive word as did the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. ii. 10, where he tells us "the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God," and by the Apostle Peter in his first epistle (i. 10), where he says the prophets "inquired and searched diligently," when they "prophesied of the grace" that should come unto men.

*Search* the Scriptures: as the miner prospecting in a new country, diligently searches for the precious metals, as the diamond hunter keenly scrutinizes what to others is only a heap of worthless rubbish, as the expectant heir eagerly examines the will of his rich deceased relative, first to see that it is properly signed, and then to find the clause on which his fortune depends, so should we "search the Scriptures" of truth.

"The Scriptures" are an indispensable aid to devotion, one of the chief sources of spiritual strength; and a revived interest in the Word of God has always preceded and accompanied real and extensive revivals of religion. The early Methodists were known as "Bible moths," and "Bible bigots," and it is difficult to understand how any person can be an eminent Christian or even a Christian at all who habitually neglects the word of God. Can a man become a skilful workman who knows not the uses of the saw and the plane and the chisel, or a learned lawyer if he be ignorant of his Coke-

or his Blackstone, or a safe navigator if he never consults his chart or his compass, or a trusted spiritual guide or eloquent preacher or sincere Christian if he be not "mighty in the Scriptures," and "thoroughly furnished" thereby "unto all good works"? The printing and circulation of the Scriptures is not enough; they must be diligently read and prayerfully studied also. And, as it has been often pointed out, and nowhere more clearly and impressively than in an admirable little volume by the late Dr. Clement Clemanse,\* the Scriptures themselves may be studied "(1) to no profit, (2) to some profit, and (3) to the greatest profit."

Nothing need be said here and now of the *critical* or even the *historical* study of the Scriptures, which methods chiefly concern the scholar and the student. Nor need we warn our readers, except in the most general way, against the dangers of a mere *literal*, *superstitious*, *superficial*, *fanciful*, *presumptuous*, or *scornful* use of the word of God. It is enough to remind the *literalist* that "the meaning of the Bible is the Bible"—"the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life"; the *superstitious*, that the Bible is not an amulet, or a charm, or a fetish; the *superficial*, who find their chief hunting-ground in the two most mysterious and symbolical books of Scripture, that the Bible is not intended to be the minister of a vain or diseased curiosity; the *fanciful*, that the Bible treats of dread realities, and sternly condemns all vain and foolish speculation; the *presumptuous*, the *scornful*, that it is the meek God promises to guide in judgment, and that unless we possess the child-spirit, we can neither understand the

\* "How to Treat the Bible," published by R. D. Dickinson.

Scriptures nor enter into the Kingdom of God. But the *discriminating* and *devout* study of the Scriptures is incumbent on all persons. Discriminating, because many persons have foolishly set up claims for the Bible which it has never made for itself, and which have never been made for it by its Author. *Devout* and *prayerful*, as well as *discriminating*, as its full and even its chief benefits cannot otherwise be obtained. Whatever theory of inspiration we may espouse, no person ever has placed or ever can place every part of the Bible on the same plane. A letter might even be written from beginning to end by one friend to another, and yet all parts of it might not be of equal value, it might indeed even contain a single sentence of more value than all the rest, because the key to the meaning of the whole. Who has ever placed one of the Gospels, or Christ's last discourse with His disciples—the “Holy of Holies,” as Dr. Maclaren has called it—or one of Paul's great epistles on the same level as one of the historical books? Is not the 23rd, or the 34th, or the 91st Psalm infinitely more precious than the 109th or the 137th? Who that has ever read intelligently the Book of Job has any doubt that its rightful place is in the Canon of Scripture; but who would claim that every sentiment and expression found therein expresses “the mind of the Spirit,” when the Lord Himself says that the three friends of Job did not speak of Him the thing that was right as His servant Job did. A declaration preceded by a “Thus saith the Lord,” is surely more authoritative than another in which the writer in giving his judgment, adds, “And I think also that I have the Spirit of God.” An old minister's excellent advice to his young friends—

“ Whenever you come to a Bible difficulty, ask, ‘ *Who* said that? *When* was it said? *Why* was it said?’ If you cannot get an answer at once, *wait till you can*. If you can get an answer, you will find that by such a process seventy-five or even ninety-five per cent. of Bible difficulties vanish at a stroke”—may be wisely followed by all Bible students. The objections to this method of studying the Scriptures have been clearly and tersely stated by Dr. Clemanee in the little book to which we have already referred.

“ ‘But,’ it may be said, ‘you thus make a distinction between some parts of Scripture and others.’ We reply—No. We do not make it; we accept it. It is already made for us . . . .

“ ‘But we shall never know where we are if we draw these distinctions.’ We reply: *We never know where we are until we have drawn them!* If God had given us a book containing **ONLY** Revelation we could regard it accordingly. But it is a library of sacred literature, containing history as well as Revelation, prayer and praise as well as prophecy; and if we do not take the pains to distinguish between the one and the other, we do not treat the Book with the honour that is its due.

“ ‘But you do away with the old teaching that we have an infallible book.’ No. Yes. Both answers are true. In matters of chronology, numbers, dates, and the mere externals of history, there may be errors or there may not. But in matters of our duty to God, to man, in its guidance for our footsteps from this life to that which is to come, it is an unerring guide, from Genesis to Revelation; in its progressive unfolding of Redemption’s mighty plan, from Paradise lost to Para-

dise regained, it is written by the finger of God: holy men of God spake as they were borne along by the Holy Ghost. The whole Book finds its unity in Christ: a unity which is not of man, nor by man, but by the revelation of the Holy Ghost."

Creation furnishes an almost perfect analogy. Creation is the work of God. "A part of His name divinely stands on all His creatures writ." But are there not in it desert places, and sandy wildernesses, and stinging insects, and poisonous plants, and ravenous beasts? These things are not, however, adduced as an argument against the wisdom and goodness of God in Creation, or the perfection, with the end He has in view, of any of His works. And even if there were in the Bible correspondencies to these things, we might still hold fast to the declaration, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

But we would insist, in a still more emphatic manner on the *devout* and *prayerful* study of God's most holy Word. "How many soever be the promises of God," in Christ "is the Yea"; this true and faithful Witness says they are all true, God's word cannot "be broken," or "pass away"; on the contrary, it "liveth and abideth for ever"; "wherefore also through Him is the Amen" we declare likewise that they are all true—"unto the glory of God through us." We may thus certainly know that God has broken the silence of eternity and has stooped from the throne of His Glory to speak to weary and sinful men. Holy Scripture is "an impregnable rock," an inexhaustible mine of spiritual wealth, a foun-

tain of wisdom and grace, ever fresh, ever flowing, ever full. It is sweeter than honey, more precious than gold, brighter far than a galaxy of ten thousand suns, and milder than the rays of night. It is a living spring, the finest of the wheat, the softest pillow, the strongest staff, the surest guide, the safest refuge. To the sinful, the troubled, and the broken-hearted it whispers words of pardon, and peace, and healing. To the teachable and the meek, its every voice is clear and distinct, its every secret is in turn disclosed, its every promise is fulfilled. It shall lead us to Him Who is the theme of its every prophecy, the glory of its every announcement, and the spring and source of its every blessing. In Him are all the wants of the world met, all its hopes realised, all its aspirations satisfied. The chief glory of the Scriptures is that they testify of Christ. We are thus brought to consider—

2. The Saviour's remarkable *testimony* to the Scriptures and Himself. “*They are they which testify of Me.*”

There is a *threefold* witness to Christ, as the context conclusively shows. In v. 31 He says, what many in our day appear to have entirely forgotten, “If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. There is another that beareth witness of Me; and I know that the witness which He witnesseth of Me is true.” It is not distinctly said Who this witness is, but the Father is surely meant, as the reference to John which follows shows that His testimony was merely incidental and subordinate. A good man is not always a good witness. The best man is not necessarily the best witness. John was a good witness. Truer, grander testimony to Christ

was never borne by human lips than by His forerunner. In the height of his popularity, in the fulness of his power, he said to the multitudes who flocked to his baptism, "He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." He saw and bore record that Jesus was the Son of God. His involuntary exclamation was, when he saw Jesus coming unto him, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" In the extinction of himself he greatly rejoiced. "He must increase," for God had not given the Spirit by measure unto Him, "but I must decrease." John in thus witnessing, was witnessing "unto the truth:" this made him "a burning and a shining light;" but Christ was independent of and infinitely above all merely human testimony, and He therefore adds, "I receive not testimony from men," even though it be as valid and unimpeachable as this testimony of John. For "the Father Himself which hath sent Me, hath borne witness of Me." He had greater witness than that of John. (1) The Father's testimony to the Son, *what* is it? "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." When was it borne? On three different occasions. At His baptism, at His transfiguration, and just before the hour of His apparent defeat but glorious triumph. At His baptism, the testimony, as He was entering on His public mission, was borne for the sake of the people, at the transfiguration for the sake of the disciples, and in the final instance, for His own sake, and for the sake, as He Himself declares, of the people also. (2) Christ's wonderful works of power and mercy were indubitable evidence of His

Messiahship. “The works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me.” Well might “all the people rejoice for all the glorious things that were done by Him.” He caused the blind to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear. He cleansed the lepers, He cast out devils, He raised the dead to life. He healed “all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.” It inspires men with hope, it fills them with admiration when an eye-witness of mighty deeds spreads abroad the fame of a great worker, but when men see the miracle itself wrought, when disease is expelled from their own frame, and health and vigour and strength come back to them, they are filled with joy, which overflows in every direction. Could we but piece all these wonderful works of Christ into a perfect unity, exhibit them in their proper light, and cause them to throb with His own tenderness and radiate with His own Divine beauty, we should all exclaim, with true adoration of soul, He had a greater witness than that of John. But (3) The perpetual witness to Christ is the Book which in so remarkable a manner testifies of Him. It is the voice out of the throne which declares that “the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy.” We can all, with the Book of God in our hands, satisfy ourselves of the truth of the declaration. In the very first promise—“The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head”—we have the germ of all subsequent revelations. So dim and obscure was this first promise that men and angels might have unwittingly passed it by unheeded. The spring of two considerable rivers in our own country is so insignificant, the source is so

hidden by the rushes, the water is so tiny in volume as to be scarcely noticeable, that I am probably not the only one who has overlooked it when I have undertaken the task of guiding others to the spot. But the rivulet as it flows on becomes a stream, and the stream two mighty rivers. The first germ of prophecy concerning Christ opens, expands, unfolds, and increases in the most wonderful manner. The promise to Abraham was much more clear and distinct: "In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." Jacob's prophecy was still more definite and complete: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet, until Shiloh come: and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." Moses had a fuller revelation. He said unto the people he so wisely led: "A prophet like unto me shall the Lord your God raise up: Him shall ye hear." And thus gradually was He made known until the whole Jewish nation became thrilled with a great Hope, the influence of which spread afar, finding expression in the triumphant exclamation, "Behold He cometh!" With the Gospels in our hands, we could construct a true and complete history of the Saviour out of the materials of the Old Testament which should comprise every important particular, such as the family of which He should be born, the place of His birth, the manner of His death, all the varied circumstances of His earthly life, and all the wondrous features of His character, His humiliation, His rejection by His countrymen, His meekness, His majesty, His death upon the Cross, His resurrection from the grave, His ascension into Heaven. If the writings of our greatest

poets and novelists, such as Shakespeare or Scott, would in many places be obscure and unintelligible if their allusions and references to Scripture were carefully deleted, so the Bible itself, if rifled of Christ, the divine-human Saviour, would be reduced to a mere chaos, without order, meaning, or authority. In this casket of Scripture, Christ is the costly jewel; in this system of revealed truth, He is the central Sun; in this magnificent temple, He is the chief corner-stone. And yet, with evidence which, the more it is examined, the more irresistible it proves to be, the Jews first, and multitudes since to whom the Gospel has been preached,

3. Wilfully *refuse* to come to Him that they might have life. Observe it is not, *ye ought*, or *may*, or *cannot*, but *ye will* not. Oh, the infinite sadness of it! The injury men do to themselves, the deep wound they inflict on the heart of Christ! It is no wonder that when, for the last time, He came near the favoured city, and beheld it, “He wept over it.” There is a tear in His eye, a tremulous pathos in every tone of His voice, a look of tender pity on His face, an unutterable agony breaking His heart as He brings this solemn charge against His hearers—“Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life.” Three wonders, each greater than the preceding, confront us at once: Ye will not *come*; ye will not come to **ME**; ye will not come to Me that ye might have **LIFE**.

(1) Not *Come*. Is there no movement of the soul towards Him, no aspiration after Him, no desire for Him; no change of attitude, no effort of the understanding, or of the will, or of the heart? Are you wholly indifferent to His claims, utterly deaf to His appeals,

stone-blind to His glories? Is there no eagerness, no impetuosity, no running after, no drawing towards Him?

(2) Do you refuse to come to *Him*? Is He not your best Friend, has He not been your great Benefactor, and is He not the only Saviour? Is He not fairer than the children of men, and altogether lovely? I can understand men refusing to come to a great poet, or a great orator, or a great philanthropist, but I cannot understand any man refusing to come to *Christ*.

(3) But the greatest marvel of all is that men refuse to come to Him that they may have *Life*. Life is their greatest need, in one sense it is their only need, and yet they refuse to come to the Living One. This word *life* is the key-word of this gospel, a large, comprehensive, all-inclusive word. It is larger than *light* or *love*. They are only phases of life. Life is light, and life is also love. The life in Jesus is the light of men. He came that we might have life, and have it more abundantly. All that a man hath will he give for his life in its lowest form, and yet many refuse to come to Christ that they may have life in its very highest form. It is like the hungry and thirsty, the famishing and perishing, refusing bread and water when it is thrust upon them. Every person who refuses to come to Christ that he may have life, *loves Death*.

“Oh come to the merciful Saviour who calls you,  
    Oh come to the Lord Who forgives and forgets ;  
Though dark be the fortune on earth that befalls you,  
    There's a bright home above where the sun never sets.”

If you come to Him, enter into vital relation with

Him, because He lives, you shall live also; your life then shall not be like the life of a flower, or the life of a bird or beast, or the life even of an angel, but when He who is your life shall appear, you also shall appear with Him in glory.



## DEGENERATION IN CHURCH WORK.

BY REV. JOHN HERRIDGE BATT.

*(Bible Christian).*

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“Ephraim loveth to tread out the corn.”—HOSEA x. 11, 12.

“EPIRAIM loveth to tread out the corn”: Others may break up the fallow ground, open the clods, plough and sow, raise the harvest, and cart home the grain; then Ephraim likes to step in and do the work that brings sure and swift returns. Ephraim had not left the house all the winter, had stayed indoors while others were out working in the fields in cold and rain and frost and heat; but now he delights to pass across the farmyard and enter the floor and “tread out the corn,” and to look round on the sun-tanned and weather-beaten workmen and say, “I think we may congratulate ourselves on having had a good year.” Ephraim is great in immediate returns: he must see his labour all at once, or he cannot be got to do anything.

The prophet tells us that this was one symptom of degeneration—one among many symptoms. The sins that enfeeble and destroy nations now, ruined Israel then. He mentions the foremost, licentiousness and drunkenness, which “take away the understanding.”

Their vices ruthlessly brought retribution ; “Ephraim feedeth on wind, and followeth after the east wind.” A career of sin is like life spent under the blight of an east wind, dry, piercing, ungenial, that chills to the very marrow. Moreover, life so lived becomes a growing hypocrisy, more and more hollow and unreal and insincere and dreary ; “He continually multiplieth lies and desolation.” “An east wind shall come, and his spring shall become dry, and his fountain shall be dried up.” “Sowing the wind, he shall reap the whirlwind ; he hath no standing corn ; the blade shall yield no bread.” Appearances of promise were illusory, evanescent. “Their goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the dew that goeth early away.” It vanishes, leaving no blessing for others or themselves. They shall be as their “goodness” is ; “They shall be as the morning cloud, as the dew that passeth early away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the threshing-floor, as smoke carried away from a chimney.” Reminding us, as all this does, that there are distinct and exact correspondences between character and destiny ; and reading a moral for all modern life, life private and public, personal and national, life religious, social, political.

My theme traces one sign of degeneration, the symptom of its unmistakable presence, and its remedy.

Love only of work that brings immediate returns is, then, a sure sign of decadent life, is it ? It seems to be even so. A medical man sometimes detects the presence of disease by one symptom alone. If the patient develop that symptom, he is satisfied what is the matter with him. So here. The prophet does not need to go

farther in his investigation. “Ephraim loveth to tread out the corn ; ” that is sufficient. He is able to at once say what the disease is that was eating away the life of the people, and to fully and satisfactorily account for the nation’s softened fibre, enfeebled health, and lowered moral standard.

You easily recall the farmyard scene he puts before you. The unmuzzled ox loves to tread out the corn because he eats while he works. He passes slowly and dreamily over the opened sheaves spread on the beaten corn-floor, going in one comfortable and mechanical round, taking mouthfuls as he treads the lazy track. He has no yoke on his sleek neck, or heavy plough behind him. He is not dragging a clumsy harrow over the rough clods ; nor is he bearing burdens along wintry roads in the keen air. Neither is he harnessed to the toil of breaking up the hard soil. Others may do that. But “Ephraim is an heifer that is taught”—he is a knowing old customer—“that loveth to tread out the corn.” As soon as you turn him out of the stall, he goes straight to the corn, never to the plough. Ephraim is an heifer only too well taught, and is quite used to distinguish easy work from hard work. Do not miss the sarcasm, even the subtle humour, of the words, “Ephraim is an heifer that is *taught*, that loveth to tread out the corn.”

One of the least complimentary things Christ ever said to the disciples of His day was this : “For herein is the saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye have not laboured ; others have laboured, and ye are entered into their labour.” Others have been active, ye are simply passive. Albeit

He recognises an inevitable law that governs labour. The danger, nevertheless, is lest we settle down in mild and complacent satisfaction with our lot, and become entirely content that our rather unheroic destiny should be to simply reap the harvest of other men's toil, consuming all, and leaving no preparation of new harvests for those who come after. I fear that this is the attitude of much of the church life of to-day. It is inheritance, not evangelisation; tradition, not originality; easy continuance of work that comes to hand from others, and little brave facing of the difficulties of commencement. There is plenty of imitation, but little initiative. The work done is work that has fallen to us, not work begun by us. We copy; and we enjoy what we have: but we are not fertile in bringing new methods of usefulness into existence. Of this we think much as we should of men who consumed the corn and made no effort for the next harvest.

Now it would never do to yield to this tendency. The prophet Hosea guards us against it as against a grave symptom of disease and decay; and he does this the more seriously because degeneration is not readily detected when it has set in, "Grey hairs are here and there upon him, and he knoweth it not."

The Remedy for Church Degeneration is that we raise our own harvests, not simply reap the harvests of other men. Yet, even then, in some instances, the harvest may possibly be reaped later on, perhaps long after we have left the field of toil.

The remedy is two-fold: We have to be trained, and we have to be taught.

There is Divine training, the discipline that God gives.

Read the words again: "Ephraim is an heifer that is taught, that loveth to tread out the corn; but I have passed over upon her fair neck: I will set a rider on Ephraim; Judah shall plough, Jacob shall break his clods." Here this knowing Ephraim is, like a full-fed heifer, with his glossy neck. But "I will pass My hand carefully along it, and slip on it the yoke, and put control on the restive beast, and harness him to the plough, and he shall do his own work, and break his own clods." This Divine handling of mercy does Ephraim get in order that he may learn to perform the hard tasks as well as the easy; and no longer shirk the difficult part of service, but fulfil it.

On this as applying to ourselves, I have only to say that the Free Churches need to be continually originating new work. Times have been, in the history of Christian activity, have they not? when State Churches could keep up a certain artificial success, a fictitious appearance of prosperity, because buttressed and supported by State endowment and patronage. But it is distinctive of the principles of the Free Churches that they can depend on continuing only so long as they fulfil their mission. If they cease to do this, they die out under a healthy law of economy that operates in the Kingdom of Heaven. The reason for their existence no longer holds good. "The Church of God which He purchased with His own blood," is dear to Him; the embodiment and manifestation of its life in outward forms and organisations of all kinds is valued by Him; but if the body become a corpse, then He loathes what in life He loved; since the life has passed into other and healthy movements. But long ere it come to this, He marks

with concern the signs of sickness and decay, the increasing drowsiness and apathy, the shrinking from self-sacrifice and from toil that is irksome to flesh and blood ; and shows His mercy in corrections and counter-checks, and chastenings, and afflictions that form a wholesome, though painful, element of experience. If it were not for difficulties and the training given in affliction, if it were not for the yoke and the plough, what would become of the Churches ! How inflated, how self-contained, how self-satisfied, and insufferably self-opinionated they would be. If we were able to read our experience in a proper light, we should even thank God for our difficulties, since they serve to keep us in our place, lest we become “as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke.” Who of us is not chastened of the Lord, particularly if we have to occupy a prominent place in the activities of the Churches ? It is a sign of hope of better work for the future when the Owner and Master passes His hand along the fair neck of Ephraim and sets a rider upon him who controls him ; for then it is that “Judah shall plough and Jacob shall break his clods.” *Training.*

Also Teaching : we are taught of God the line of true service, “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy ; break up your fallow ground ; for it is time to seek the Lord.”

We are reminded of Him that duty always concerns Personal Character first, “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy.” There is, He assures us, immediate return here ;—if not in other work outside of ourselves, there is here. There should not be anything unreal, or merely professional in our spirit ; but integ-

rity, uprightness, sincerity, honesty, fidelity. Nothing blights and blasts the harvest of the Church like the fiction of a life that is not lived righteously and consistently. On the other hand, nothing yields a ready and wealthy harvest of good in the Church like the presence and steady influence of a holy walk, a life lived in union and fellowship of prayer and faith and love with Christ, and in communion of the Holy Spirit. If you want "quick returns," then "sow to yourselves in righteousness," brethren. Live holy lives. Nothing is so vital as this.

And, bound up with and revealing character, is our Method of Work, concerning which the prophet instructs us that we are to learn to do the hardest work. "Break up your fallow ground." Multitudes of people are needing to be evangelised. Nearly all the evangelised generations of the Great Revival are gone. A vast population is growing up around us that, explain it as we may, is not in line with the Christian Church. It is difficult work that lies before us. "Break up your fallow ground." The ground is hard-trodden. Much of it looks about as promising as a macadamised road, or the proverbial ploughing of the sand on the sea-shore. Yet our duty is clear. Remember that "fallow ground" is land that has lain untilled all the year, land that was ploughed but not sown. So no harvest came of the first ploughing. It has to be ploughed over again; and may, perhaps, be expected to bear well, especially as nothing has been got out of it for some time. You may find it necessary to do a good deal of the work over again from the beginning because it was not carried far enough before. Breaking up the

fallow ground means business. Brace yourselves to yoke and plough ; shrink not back. Let Him get the plough in, and open and lay bare to the fertilising wholesome wind and rain and frost and sun whatever needs to be disturbed. Hear Him say, “Take My yoke upon you ; ” and heed, and yield obediently unto Him, as well as hear Him.

“ For it is time to seek the Lord.” Half-measures, mere make-believes, will not do. The force of this exhortation of the prophet is seen when we bear in mind what he had said before, that there were those in Ephraim (vii. 16) who, not being able wholly to resist the tide of repentance and revival and recovery that came up over Israel, returned, “ but not to the Lord.” “ They are like a deceitful bow,” says Hosea, with quick-sighted knowledge of the untrustworthiness of these half-and-half men. “ They are like a deceitful bow,” that slips just as the arrow is fired on account of some fault in the construction, perhaps want of balance in the make ; so missing the mark. Those who do not return *to the Lord* will fail you just at the moment when they are wanted. They show a faint sign of movement in the same direction as the whole-hearted are going, but do not go far enough ; they do not go to the Lord. Men never go far enough when they do not go to *Him*. Return now to Christ. Not anything is so valuable and indispensable as a return to the Lord on the part of us all, a good, honest, straightforward, self-renouncing return to the Lord. “ Let us return to the Lord, and He will have mercy upon us, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” For it is time ! “ It is time to seek the Lord ! ” The years are going fast.

We have, many of us, invested our lives in this work. Have we not had one purpose, which, as bright threads, runs through all our life, holding together the parts and giving unity and coherence to the whole ; and that purpose has been to make the best of ourselves for Christ ; can we not truly and humbly say ? Then let us not be misled, or diverted from the end of the Grace of God in us : but keep alive our fellowship with Christ, search His Word that we may receive and give to others a nourished experience, and still keep before us the high ideals of a Christ-honouring and a Christ-witnessing service.

That the Remedy is effectual is seen from the Blessing that follows, which is after the measure of days of old : “ Till He come and rain righteousness upon you.” Our Lord is our hope. He will make His advent, and He shall copiously rain righteousness upon you. There shall be showers of blessing, floods upon the dry ground, the pouring out of His Spirit on all flesh ; an inundation of truth and righteousness, a very deluge of spiritual power.

“ Seek the Lord ; ” and then, to work. We used, I think, to be bolder in giving work to our people than we are to-day ; and in telling them of the duty of taking in hand the raw material outside, and of starting the first stages of missionary and evangelistic service in places that need us most. Our fathers were often appointed to circuits that only existed prospectively. It must of necessity have been so, or how would our work have come to exist in the first instance ? To them I apply words of Browning (“ Sordello ” ii. 154)—

“ Men of action, these !  
Who just **seeing** as little as you please,

Yet turn that little to account, engage  
With, do not gaze at,—carry on, a stage,  
The work o' the world, not merely make report  
The work existed ere their day !         "

Let us carry on the work of the world a stage, not simply make report of the work that existed before our day. We cannot live on reports of days that are past; but need to do great and Christ-like deeds to-day. Reports are dry if they are read by any except people who are bedewed with the spirit of present service and up-to-date enterprise. I would conclude with the words with which the prophet Hosea, who furnishes us with our subject, finishes his strong and bracing book of messages, all of which are so seasonable and medicinal and helpful, "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but transgressors shall fall therein."



## LOVE TO CHRIST AND THE REVELATIONS IT SECURES.

BY REV. G. PARKIN, B.D.

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“ He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me ; and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.”—  
JOHN xiv. 21.

GOD has given us many revelations of Himself. The world in which we live reveals His power ; the laws by which it is governed reveal His wisdom. The history of the human race shows that He hates injustice and loves righteousness. Conscience with its promptings and restraints, its approvals and disapprovals, speaks so clearly and strongly that men have ever regarded it as the Divine voice in the soul. The Bible, too, besides instructing us like other books and moving us to goodness, speaks with Divine authority and makes us feel that it has come from God. Above all, we have Jesus Christ uttering words of Divine wisdom, performing acts of Divine power, and by His death revealing the strength and tenderness of Divine love. So clear is His revelation that He says, “ He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” To these revelations my text adds another, which is not confined to any land or to any age,

“He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him.”

Revelations are received by man in different ways. Beauty comes through the eye; harmony through the ear; revelations of Christ through love. The blind man knows nothing of beauty, either of form or of colour; the deaf man never hears the sweet sounds of music or the voices of his friends; the man who does not love cannot receive the higher revelations promised by Christ. He can know God only through revelations made to other men; he hears of Him, but never listens to Him; his knowledge is only second-hand, and, resting entirely on the testimony of others, often fails him in times of need. This is how it was with Job. He had heard of God “by the hearing of the ear;” but knowledge so acquired did not sustain him when great losses and sufferings came. Not until he heard God for himself did he bow reverently before Him and say, “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer Thee?” We have no need to rest entirely on the testimony of others. As God is our Father He wishes to speak to us; and Jesus Christ seeks loving souls that He may reveal to them the treasures of His grace. I purpose therefore to say a little about love to Christ and the revelations it secures.

**I. LOVE TO CHRIST.** Love is one of the few words in our language that we never think of defining. It represents feelings too deep and too high to be bound by any definition. Christ does not define it; but as the highest revelations of God to the soul depend on love He says enough to indicate its meaning,—“He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me.”

1. Knowledge therefore is one of the main elements in love. We cannot love a man unless we know him ; and to know him is to know not merely his size and features, but his thoughts, his feelings, his disposition. These are revealed to us partly through the words that he utters. As water by its colour, taste, and deposit makes known to us the kind of rock or soil through which it has cut its way, so words make known to us the kind of mind from which they have come. The words of Carlyle reveal his strength, and those of Cowper his tenderness. In like manner, the words of Jesus reveal the strength, the tenderness, the purity, the grandeur of His soul. Think of what He said respecting God. To the religious teachers of the day, God was merely the God of the Jews ; but Jesus spoke of Him as the Universal Father, whose heart went out to Jew and Gentile alike, ever seeking to deliver them from evil, and enrich them with the treasures of His love. Think of what He said respecting man. He spoke of him as a child of God, who, like the Prodigal, had wandered from home, and this truth helped man to understand his strange longings for God, and his restlessness whilst away from Him. Think of what He said respecting the future. To Him the other side of the grave was not a blank, as the Sadducees taught, but a place of conscious life, a home where the good and true meet together, receive the higher vision, and enter on the nobler service of Heaven. Think of the commands which He gave ; not cold and senseless as too often were the commands given by the Rabbis, but such as commended themselves to the reason and consciences of men,—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul,

and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. xxii. 37-40). No wonder that men heard Him gladly, and said that His word was with power, and not like that of the Scribes. In those and kindred words we have revealed the pure and lofty soul of Jesus so far as human speech is capable of revealing what is Divine.

But men reveal themselves by act as well as by word, and in the acts of Jesus we see His power, His insight, His pity. As we think of Him stilling the tempest, giving sight to the blind, and raising the dead to life, we feel, like Nicodemus, that we are in the presence of one who has come from God and say, "No man can do the miracles which Thou doest except God be with him." That He could read men's deepest thoughts is seen in the way He exposed the base designs of those who questioned Him respecting the tribute money or His healing on the Sabbath-day. We see His pity as He stands at the tomb of Lazarus and minglest His tears with those of Mary and Martha; as He weeps over the city which had rejected Him; as He hangs on the Cross and prays for His murderers.

It is because Christ is revealed in His words and acts that we seek to make them known. We teach them to our children in the Sunday School; we give them prominence in the services of the sanctuary; we send missionaries to far-off lands to tell them to the heathen. Ignorance, far from being the mother of devotion, is the mother of superstition. We want men to know Christ that knowledge may lead them to love.

2. Obedience is another element in love; we must not only have the Commandments, but keep them. A man is not made healthy and strong by a knowledge of the chemical elements of food, but by what he digests and converts into blood and bone and muscle. Knowledge of itself is not a sufficient evidence of love to Jesus; we must practise what we know. Men are tempted to separate the two. "Nevertheless even of the rulers many believed on Jesus; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the glory of men more than the glory of God" (John xii. 42). The fear of man and the love of praise still cause many to be untrue to their convictions. They know that sin is an evil; that they are responsible for their conduct; that Jesus came to reveal the Father; that He is the Saviour of them that believe; but they do not act according to that knowledge.

Jesus taught the importance of uniting the two, and the folly of separating them,—"Whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it" (Matt. vii. 24-27). If therefore we would stand in times of danger we must not only know Christ, but be loyal to Him. Knowledge must lead to service.

## II. THE REVELATIONS LOVE SECURES.

1. Love is the condition on which revelations are always given. We see this in nature. The men whose names are associated with great discoveries in physical science were all in sympathy with nature. Kepler loved to look at the starry heavens, and was as familiar with them as you are with the faces of your dearest friends. He knew that the planets moved, but not the kind of path they traversed. For eight long years he watched the planet Mars that from it he might learn the movements of the rest. During those years he often denied himself of sleep and exposed himself to cold winds and to biting frosts, till at last Nature said, "He has waited long enough ; he deserves to know." So she took him into her confidence and showed him that the planets move not in circular but elliptical orbits—a truth she had not previously shown to mortal man. He loved and therefore got the revelation.

It is the same in Art. Sir Isaac Newton occasionally visited the Earl of Pembroke and, as the Earl was fond of statuary, many rare and costly statues adorned his entrance-hall. On one occasion, Newton said to another visitor, "I wonder what the Earl can see to admire in stone dolls." He did not love statuary, so he got no revelation ; for Art, like Nature, only shows her beauties to the soul that loves.

It is the same with men. To whom do you reveal yourselves? Certainly not to strangers, and not even to your acquaintances unless they love you. We have noticed when at the station waiting for a train, two men walk arm in arm and talk earnestly to each other. A third joined them, but that moment the conversation

ceased. They were not talking about him, nor were they saying anything wrong; but they were saying what they did not want him to hear. The two loved, so each revealed himself to the other; they only knew the third, so he was not allowed to share in the revelation.

Our highest life in this world is our home-life, and in the home love secures its best revelations. From of old it has been said that there should be no secret between husband and wife. The husband loves his wife, and therefore takes her into his confidence; the wife loves her husband and tells him everything. Now Jesus says, "Treat Me as you treat one another; love Me as you love your friends, your husbands, and your wives, and I will come and reveal Myself to you."

2. Men who have observed this condition have received revelations from Christ. For confirmation of this statement we must go to experience; we must question those who really loved Jesus and hear if they received revelations from Him. If ever a man loved Jesus, Paul did. His love is seen in the sacrifices he made for Him, the labours he performed, the sufferings he endured. What then does Paul say?—"I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth;) such a one, caught up to the third heaven." But feeling that he has failed to express his revelation he tries again. "I knew such a man (whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor.

xii. 1-4). In these words we have a high spiritual experience. Jesus revealed Himself so richly and sweetly that Paul wondered whether he was still in the body, wrapped round with flesh and bones, or had crossed the border-land and taken his stand with the "just made perfect." I am thankful for this testimony, for whilst Paul was a man of strong feeling he was also a man of strong reasoning powers. What his imagination pictured and his heart felt had, as far as possible, to vindicate its claim to reality before the bar of reason. Here then we find him calmly examining the experience of fourteen years ago and boldly asserting its reality. He loved, so he got the revelation; and yet though both gifted and inspired, he could not express its blessedness.

Since his day thousands have felt like him. It would be interesting and profitable to listen to the testimonies of Augustine, Bernard, Tauler, Ruysbroeck, Charles Wesley, and others, whose names light up the centuries between Paul's day and ours, but there is no need. It will be sufficient to notice a few of the words used; for some were coined on purpose, and others received a spiritual baptism that they might express their joyous feelings.

The word "ecstasy" is one of them—literally, a standing outside one's self. It was first used to denote the removal of a thing from its proper place, then alienation of mind through fear or wonder, then a trance, and, lastly, the experience of those who got such a view of Christ that, like Paul, they wondered whether they were in the body or out of the body. Charles Wesley, expressing his own experience and that of the early Methodists, sings—

“ Spirit of holiness,  
Let all Thy saints adore  
Thy sacred energy, and bless  
Thy heart-renewing power :  
Not angel-tongues can tell  
Thy love’s *ecstatic* height,  
The glorious joy unspeakable,  
The beatific sight.”

We seldom use the word now. Is it because our love is feebler than that of our fathers, and our revelations therefore less rich?

The word “mystic” belongs to this class. Meaning one who shuts his eyes, it was applied to those initiated into the mysteries of the old Greek religion. With the advent and growth of Christianity it received a richer meaning and was consecrated to a higher service. It was much used in Medieval times, especially on the eve of the Reformation. As books were scarce and manuscripts dear, pious souls had to get their knowledge of Jesus largely from the pictorial representations hung in churches. But some felt that the representation was unworthy of the Christ they loved, and as they looked at it said, “We have seen a grander Christ than the one painted there ; those eyes have never gazed on the wonders of the spirit-world ; those features have never been lit up with Divinity ; those lips have never trembled with Infinite pity.” They closed their eyes therefore to the rude painting to look at the Christ which their own imagination figured within.

But when they turned from things seen to things not seen, from things temporal to things spiritual, they did not ignore reason, but refused to assign it the highest place in human nature. They believed that there are

things above as well as below it; causes of emotion which it cannot explain; truths seen and felt which it cannot understand, in presence of which the only proper attitude of the soul is one of lowly reverence. Men with no eye for the spiritual, but who could utter all they saw and felt and believed, laughed and called them mystics. But they were unmoved by the sneer and not ashamed of the name. Men now acknowledge their greatness and the precious elements they contributed to Christian experience. It is of one of them that Tennyson sings—

“ Angels have talked with him and shown him thrones :  
 Ye knew him not, he was not one of ye,  
 Ye scorned him with an undiscerning scorn :  
 Ye could not read the marvel in his eye,  
 The still serene abstraction ; he hath felt  
 The vanities of after and before.”

Those men loved and they got the revelation.

The words “quietist” and “enthusiast” witness to the same precious truth. The one tells us of men who studied to be quiet, to close their ears to the bewitching voices of the world that they might listen to God; and the other, of men who opened the avenues of the soul that God might flow into them and fill them with Himself.

This experience is borne out by the testimony of our best devotional literature. It colours the “Imitation of Christ,” and the finest hymns of Charles Wesley, Ray Palmer, F. W. Faber and many more. I have noticed the faces of men beaming with joy as they have sung :—

“ Lie open, soul ! lo, Jesus waits  
 To enter thine abode ;  
 Messiah lingers at thy gates—  
 Let in the Son of God.”

Or Ray Palmer's words—

“ I see Thee not, I hear Thee not,  
Yet art Thou oft with me ;  
And earth hath ne'er so dear a spot,  
As where I meet with Thee.  
  
Like some bright dream that comes unsought  
When slumbers o'er me roll,  
Thy image ever fills my thought,  
And charms my ravished soul.”

3. But whilst love is the sole condition on which revelations are given, yet the methods in which Christ reveals Himself are different. At times He does it by causing some great truth to rise on the mind. This is how He revealed Himself to the Samaritan woman. When she first saw Him, He was to her a wearied traveller and nothing more. But when He spoke about the “ gift of God ” and “ living water,” a vague idea of His greatness rose in her mind, and she asked, “ Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well ? ” He gently lifts the veil from her hidden life and she “ perceives that He is a prophet.” They talk of sacred things and He tells her that both Jews and Samaritans have wrong notions of consecration ; that sanctity is not in the place but in the mind of the worshipper ; that God is Spirit and can be worshipped anywhere ; and with these great truths Jesus revealed Himself to her. The way-worn traveller grew in her thought until He was worthy of being compared with Jacob, then with the prophets whose names were the brightest in Hebrew history, finally He embodied her idea of Messiahship, the noblest conception of her race.

Has there not been something analogous to this in our experience ? We had been taught that Jesus was

a Saviour, and had spoken of Him as the Saviour of the world; but the word had no personal significance for us, it excited no picture in our mind of deliverance from evil, and no gratitude for that deliverance. But when we felt that we were sinners, that we had fallen beneath ourselves by cherishing unworthy thoughts and performing unworthy deeds, then the truth that God loved us, and that Christ had come to make known His love took possession of us, and through it He revealed Himself as our Saviour.

Another means of revelation is the activity of men. When the disciples had toiled all night and caught nothing, Jesus commanded them to launch out into the deep and to let down their nets for a draught. "And when they had done this, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes, and their net brake" (Luke v. 4-6). He wanted to teach them that He was the Christ—the Son of God with power—and their act furnished Him with the opportunity. He has done the same with us. We can look back to crucial periods when we had come to the parting of the ways, and knew not which to take lest it should be the wrong one. But the force of circumstances compelled us to act, and the moment we stepped forth into the darkness Christ became our guide. He stood there all the time, but could not reveal Himself until we acted. Again, you have had your losses; your plans miscarried; your investments failed; the earnings of years were swept away in a moment; you felt the instability of all earthly things; you prayed God to help you, and through that prayer He revealed Himself as the Comforter. The same is seen in the ordinary events of life. You begin a new business or ex-

tend an old one ; you form a new friendship ; you visit the sick ; you teach a class in the Sunday School, and each of these acts gives Christ an opportunity of revealing Himself to you.

Another method is by direct action on the soul. He excites desires in men, suggests thoughts and kindles aspirations. How He does it we know not ; but our inability to perceive the Spirit at work is no valid reason for discrediting His operations. We are so accustomed to associate noise and show with work that we are in danger of thinking that where these are wanting nothing is done ; and yet God is always teaching us that the most potent forces in nature are quiet and unseen in their operations. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," carrying life and health to man and beast, "yet we know not whence it cometh nor whither it goeth." The plant grows, but we know not how. We cannot enter the laboratory of nature and watch the mysterious thing called life transmute soil, water, light, and air, into root and stem and leaf. The needle points to the north, yet we see not the subtle influence which draws it. Stones fall to the earth, and the planets pursue their lonely course, but we neither see nor hear the gravitation which keeps them in their path. We infer the presence and activity of the agents from the effects, and the inference is just. It is the same with the Spirit and His work. The indifferent become concerned about the cause of God ; nobler impulses stir within them ; they get a new ideal of life, and act from higher motives ; they live no longer to themselves, but to Him who died for them, and rose again. We notice the change and say, It is the work of the Spirit ; God has visited them.

There have been times when the Spirit so strengthened and exalted our mental powers that we were like inspired men ; the Bible became a new book to us ; we beheld wonders of wisdom and love in it which we never suspected ; the heavens opened and we saw visions of God. We heard Christ's voice and felt His power :—

“Then evil lost its grasp, and passion, hushed,  
Owned the Divine enchantment of the hour.”

Such visits and revelations have made Christ more real to us than any others. We do not ignore or underestimate those given to other men, but our faith does not rest on them alone. If it did, it would rest on an authority external to the soul, and in the great trials of life such a faith is almost sure to fail. We believe in Christ because we have seen, and heard, and felt Him for ourselves. Brethren, cling to the historic Christ, but do not regard that conception as an adequate representation of His character. “I delivered unto you first of all,” says Paul, that is, amongst the first things, the initial principles, “how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” But Paul did not wish the Corinthian believers to stop there. He besought them to go forward that they might know Christ as the risen Saviour, still living and acting among men. You, too, may know Him in the glory and power of His present life ; and He wants you thus to know Him. He solicits your love, that through it He may reveal Himself and dwell in your heart as a Divine Guest. If you do not love Him, He will be to you “as a root out of a dry ground,” “without form and comeliness ;” but if you love Him, He will be the “only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

## STIRRING TRUTH TO STIR THE TIMES.

BY REV. JOSEPH ODELL.

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“And about that time there arose no small stir concerning the *Way*”—(R.V.) Acts xix. 23.

PAUL described a circle of the important cities of his day by his successive missionary journeys. He invested them with lines of light, not only marking them for the Lord Jesus, but leaving in them the seeds of a higher morality, and a spiritual fellowship. In his third missionary journey he revisits the scenes of earlier labours, and waters the seed planted there. The great interest of this journey lies in the importance which the city of Ephesus assumes as a centre of Apostolic labours. Paul saw the need of proper places as strategic points of missionary warfare. Jerusalem had been one; Antioch and Corinth had been likewise secured; now the Apostle takes Ephesus—“the city of Diana,” as his immediate sphere of operations. This choice of the cities for Christian centres was not a policy of human skill; it was undoubtedly a true providential forecast of the ultimate worth of vast centres of population, when brought under the redeeming and socialising power of Christ. Paul at Ephesus, was at the heart of Asia Minor. Diana, the Goddess of all Asia, was enshrined,

enthroned, and worshipped there. The magnificent Temple was the banking-house and business source of the greatest idolatry of that time. Diana had her festivals also. Her "*May Meetings*" were very costly and prolonged. The city spent the month of May in devotions to the Goddess. It was called "Diana month." The period was given up to worship and games in the name of the Goddess. In this great city, vigorous with commercial enterprise, voluptuous with Oriental splendour, and vitiated with idolatry, Paul found room and opportunity for three years of gospel preaching. This ultimate return and prolonged stay of the Apostle in Ephesus are highly significant. We see that there ought to be recognised bases and specific plans of missionary labour: that populous places are positions to be taken and held for the Lord Jesus: that the missionary is warranted in attacking the reigning evils of the place and time: that his mission will be justified by the supernatural might with which he will be enabled to conquer these evils: that in the gospel the missionary has all *the revolutionary facts and all the revolutionary forces*, that the most obdurate and idolatrous cities may require to make them beautiful as the city of our God. The simple statement of this text, a mere item of history when read only as connecting the narratives, contains a profound philosophy when regarded as the key of Paul's entire work at Ephesus. It remains a sublime fact, that during Paul's stay, *the Word* of his ministry, *the Way* of his faith and life—*this Way* and *this Word*, created immense excitement. Paul preached and practised the truth that greatly stirred the time. So it is ever, gospel preaching, pro-

moting progress and practice, will produce a profound stir; while frequently the most influential interests and the most infuriated passions will antagonise its advancement. Whatever may be the condition of mankind or the complexities of society, the gospel has the truth to *stir the times*. This then is our subject:—

### STIRRING TRUTH TO STIR THE TIMES.

We proceed

#### I. To RECOGNISE THE TIME.

In attempting this, we do not propose the employment of the word “Time” as a mere popular phrase relating to a temporary period, but we accept its larger meaning and use it as a representative term. To us it tells of a grand historic period. This was the invariable method of Paul. In his epistles he writes of “the fulness of the times;” “the dispensation of the fulness of times;” “to declare at *this time* His righteousness.” “And that knowing the time.” These passages relate to a distinct period. It is the age of grace. To all the Apostles this age was so grand that they thought it could not last. It was expected to close early and suddenly. It was too good to last. Its end was near. They hastened to it. Thank God, it still lasts. If ours is the final, it is not yet the finished age. The sun lingers in the sky. The light is with us. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” We have this same grand period. Though in the final stage of the world’s development, we are not yet at the end of it. The remedial agencies are working, but the full remedy is not yet wrought; we have the perfect religion, but its power and beauty are not yet realised; we have a suffi

cient revelation, but we have not yet fathomed it; we have a fixed though not a finished faith. Ours is the Pentecost; ours the Priesthood and grace of Christ; "The promise is unto us and to our children." It is the same time. The Apostolic days are still ours.

We further recognise the time—

*2. In view of the conditions and needs of the Human Race.*

We recognise time properly, only by regarding it in relation to our own conditions and needs. In this sense, time is capital and life. It is the opportunity and seed-life of a glorious or gloomy eternity. The pictures of our best or worst being are produced by the processes of time. Our Apostle caught that great fact. He saw that in this very period, glorious with the gifts of God, the state of the race was heart-rending and, humanly speaking, hopeless. The old time brought no relief. The new dispensation caught him up into its promise and purpose for the race. The Epistle to the Romans is one intense expression of this; the desperate condition of the race is first made luminous by gospel discovery and then lively with gospel hope. It is now the very same time. Nothing is so misleading as the statement, "Everything is changed now." Nothing in man is changed until it is changed by God. Nothing in man is settled until it is settled right. The elements of human nature remain the same. Changes are only in the contingencies and externals. As the great laws of nature remain, though the face of nature may change many times in a year; so the character of humanity is the same, although some forms and expressions of it vary

with some passing hour. There is an unchangeable character of human experience. Without the Divine work *that* remains the same wrong element; the bottom fact of our baser being. It is this total depravity, this unit of sin, which gives direction and propensity to life. Paul told it all in his Epistle to the Romans. He had never learned to compliment poor fallen nature, because God had condemned it; to him the fall was not a scientific misfortune but a Satanic fact. As he saw men, Satan peered out of their eyes, cursed through their polluted lips, and sat in squalid sovereignty in their filthy hearts. In this time it is that same old nature. Those elements are unchanged. Even those very "innocent children of nature," the poor savages, have felt and acknowledged this. The depraved nature has wrought all their mischief and all their woe. In fact the picture of depraved life given in the first of Romans, has proved so faithful and true to the life, that the heathen in all lands where the gospel is now preached have acknowledged its correctness as applied to themselves. There have been instances in which the heathen have charged the missionary with writing these passages from the living examples present before them. Dr. Peter Chamberlain, of Vellore, India, was once publicly reciting the 1st chapter of Romans, when one of his audience insisted that the missionaries must have written that chapter, after their arrival in India, for otherwise they could not have described the existing state of things so exactly. In our own land, this depravity, even when controlled by culture; when suppressed by society, or caught in its criminal acts and confined by law, has wrought terrible havoc. Its passions and propensities have been its

surest condemnation ; while its pains and pangs, its unspoken pleas, and unvoiced prayers have stirred the pity of the Universe ; "The whole creation groaneth and travaleth in pain together until now." This plea or pain is in every human heart. The old selfhood satisfies no one. The noblest men have struggled to free themselves from its constraints, or relieve themselves of its penalties. But the defeat and degradation have been invariable and universal. Even our greatest poets, of whom it has been said, they are "the prophets of human nature," have voiced this experience.

The poet Burns is heard to wail—

"O life, thou art a galling load,  
Along a rough and weary road,  
To wretches such as I."

And Byron confessed that neither genius nor gratification, pleasure nor applause, could save him from the demon that possessed him. In his poem to Inez he utters the wild lament,

"What exile from himself can flee ?  
To zones the more and more remote,  
Still, still pursues where'er I be,  
The blight of life—the demon thought.  
What is the worst ? nay, do not ask—  
In pity from the search forbear ;  
Smile on—nor venture to unmask  
Man's heart, and view the Hell that's there."

While Shakespeare, the daring explorer of life's deepest thoughts,—who entered the great lone land of the heart and discovered continents of human character, was led to cry,

"O God ! O God !  
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,  
Seem to me all the uses of this world !"

While to one of his characters, he turns the defeat of life into the coward's prayer for death ;

“Would I were dead, if God's good will were so !  
For what is in this world but grief and woe ?”

It is enough ; we recognise the same time ; all over the world the clock of humanity has struck the hour ; there must be a new life and a new hope for men.

Further we must recognise the time—

### *3. In reference to a personal Christian commission.*

It was no accidental phrase for Paul to say, “A dispensation of the gospel is committed to me.” He had become savingly related to the gospel, therefore solemnly related to all who needed that gospel. Converted, consecrated, commissioned men are properly related to the time. With Paul's conversion he received his commission for the conversion of the whole world. To be “the Apostle of the Gentiles” was not his choice, but his necessity. In his life all laws centred in one, the law of demand and supply. There was a pressing universal demand for salvation and Jesus Christ supplied it. It was all as one law. The unit of sin. The unit of salvation. The unit of service. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is Eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.” This must be told at Ephesus. It had been told there. Now Paul must go to Rome. “I must also see Rome.” The whole world revolved around Rome and he must be there. Time and place must make of him a central living fact. The hour had struck. He was saved to save the world. Where the world's heart is, he must therefore be. Rome was ripe ; he was ready. Ephesus was a great, grand city. Rome

was greater and grander. To preach the gospel in Rome had been the grandest dream of his sanctified imagination. Paul must have the best centre and the best city for his message and his Master. Nothing less than the world's metropolis will do for the world's Monarch. To take the world he must take its chief city. Rome for Christ! The world for Christ! Thus we recognise the time; the time of the gospel; the gospel to meet the needs of the world; the converted and commissioned man for the Time.

## II. WE REHEARSE THE TRUTH.

It is in the nature of divine truth that it should be rehearsed. This is independent of the peculiarities of any age or place; the practice of restatement is essential everywhere and at all times. It is only in this way that the communication of the truth becomes successful. In this respect the history of the Christian faith in Ephesus will illustrate its spread all over the world. The features by which it was characterised there, will characterise it everywhere. So Paul's ministry was primarily a witnessing, testifying to the things which he knew. His theme was assigned him. He had not to originate a message, but to carry it. The truths of revealed religion were his theme, and religion as *revealed* in the *Way* and *Word* of the Lord Jesus. His only subject was, "the *Word* of the Lord Jesus." All true missionary work must find its source here. This makes the difference between an ambassador of Christ and a mere adventurer. The one tells to others what he has received from God; the other what he has dreamed about Him, or thought out for himself. The one is a witness,

the other a speculator. Here only is the security of the divine blessing. God blesses the truth which He has given. He has never promised to bless any other to our spiritual good. Not what we have discovered, even if it be the truth, but what He has revealed, *that* He has promised to attend with His Spirit. “So shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.” In rehearsing the Truth—

*We tell of its Divine Origin.*

The facts of the gospel are all divinely originated. The forces are divinely authenticated. The fulness is divinely assured. The fact of the Incarnation; of the Transfiguration; of the Crucifixion; of the Resurrection; of the Ascension; of the Unchangeable Priesthood;—these are all divine. Not merely divinely said; *they are divinely made!* God is in them all. They are the greatest facts of history. Paul in the rehearsal of them uttered the very words that shall yet breathe in all human history. In these facts dwell the grandest forces of all history. The forces of submission; of forgiveness of foes; of sympathy and love. The force and power of God indeed! It was such facts and forces that were discovered by the centurion and his soldiers as they stood around the Cross of our dying Lord. They listened to His prayer for His murderers; they heard His triumphant dying cry:—“*It is finished.*” They saw and heard what soldier on the field of strife had never seen or heard. They saw One on that Cross *who need not die!* The submission, the sweetness, the sublimity, the solemn-

ity of that death aroused those stupid warriors ; and they saw for once, that death was life, that submission was conquest, that Man was God. "Truly this was the Son of God." All these facts are one. There could not have been such a death without the life ; nor such a life without the immaculate birth. There could not have been such a resurrection without that voluntary sacrificial death, nor such an ascension without the sublimity and glory of the empty tomb. Moreover, the divine fulness is in them. "Of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." There is a fulness of Truth that knows nothing of local bounds ; it shall overflow for all the Nations. It knows nothing of temporary periods, marked by the ages of Kings, or the progress of Science ; it illuminates all the centuries. It knows nothing of personal peculiarities. It is for all men and each man. It so saves the person as he is. "Presenting every man Perfect in Christ Jesus." "Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them ;" yes, a fulness of salvation for all men ; a fulness of salvation for the entire life of each man.

*We tell of its Divine Operations.*

This truth must operate according to its own nature. It has a divine law of operation, because it has a divine life. It is always *expressive*. Its language is like its life, persistent, penetrating, potential. "The word of God is quick and powerful." It penetrates the human soul, and portrays the man himself. It tells him all his life ; it arouses the conscience, and

mirrors the character. It tells all the hidden secrets and destroys all the false securities of the sinner's life. It enthrones divine law, and invites and entreats with divine love. In the penitent and believing soul it becomes a very poem vocal with divine music. It can spell sin in a thousand ways, and show salvation by a single sign—*the Cross of Christ*. It is always *expulsive*. At its entrance into the soul the deposition and dethronement of Satan must take place. By its light the darkness is dispelled, by its life death flees away. The positive nature of divine truth always makes it thus *expulsive* and triumphant. Give to this truth the key of the human soul, and it will not only take possession, it will purify and furnish with all adornments and fill with rarest music. Given a submissive will and this truth shall destroy all sin. Yes, all sin! Sin, the serpent that stings; the fire that burns; the knife that cuts; the syren that charms but to destroy. Enter Truth! The syren dies, the knife is broken, both blade and hilt destroyed. The fire is extinguished; nor shall those embers smoulder any more. The serpent's sting is gone, the head is broken and the fierce vile brood destroyed. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." *It is always expansive*. Deposit the word of the Lord Jesus and it will not only take care of itself, but it will take care of its possessor; it will change the conditions of his life, and soon transform his environment. It has the charm of life and growth; it teaches, trains, triumphs. Its possessor will not only feel it spread, but the public will soon see its expansive tendencies. It will grow from lip to lip, and life to life. In the most unlikely atmos-

phere and among the most unpromising conditions it grows. In Ephesus where selfishness and superstition held full sway, it took root and grew out, until "all Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks." Above all, where the grand Temple stood, at the very shrine of the Goddess, whose marble magnificence and golden glory overawed the city, *there* the truth took hold and then travelled out, North, South, East, West. The testimony of Demetrius shows its trend and triumph. "Moreover, ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people." The fury of Paul's enemies at Ephesus shows the marvellous success of the truth. A lonely voice began to tell the truth of Salvation; a howling mob for full two hours could neither contradict nor control that living Message. A simple word had struck Diana and the interests of selfishness and superstition felt the blow and could not recover. This truth spread upwards from the school-house to the court-house. The Asiarchs and judges were under its blessed sway. All classes felt the thrill and yielded to the heavenly stir. So high and extensive had become the flow of truth that it was like a flood whose waters reach the tops of the hills. This expansion of the truth, however, does not lessen or neutralise its expulsive power. The truth possessed will always cleanse the heart, culture the life, and civilise the community. Idolatry ceases. Even false systems of commerce die; while the entire habit of the community yields to a nobler manner and a transfigured life. Give truth the sway and every bad business and unholy traffic must expire. The curse of slavery; the whole-

safe murders of national wars ; the vice and villainy of the liquor traffic ; the leprosy of impure literature ; these and all the kindred crimes and follies of the time shall be swept away by the pure tides of advancing truth. The gospel saves the man and thus promotes pure society. *It is the Great Civiliser.*

In this faith we will not falter. In this commission of the truth we allow no compromise. Remembering the expansive and progressive nature of the truth, our task as ministers and missionaries is immensely simplified, and the simplicity of the method prepares the way for greater intensity and concentration in execution. We are not called to assume the educational and industrial activity of those to whom we carry the gospel. They must as men like ourselves, under the leadership of Christ, work out their own temporal salvation. It is our business to make men the disciples of Christ. It is not our duty to educate them, or emancipate them, or to civilise them, but to Christianise them. Culture, political liberty, industrial improvement will most surely follow, but none of the products of Christian civilisation will come to stay until Christianity has taken root ; and then they will come without foreign pressure. We believe in schools, in literature, in deliverance from political tyranny, in social improvement ; but all these must be the living outgrowth of something deeper and more radical—the life of the Holy Ghost in the souls of men. The tree must be planted before the fruits can be eaten. This is the only true method of civilising. To preach the gospel and save the soul is to work outward from the centre to the circumference, each man the centre of his own circle, and thus

through saved men, the truth extends in ever-widening circles, until it encompasses all persons and all places, and “the earth is full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

*We tell of its Divine Obligations.*

Near the fountains of truth, when the gospel was taught in its pure nature, men recognised the divine obligations and cheerfully responded to them and literally fulfilled them. It was so at Ephesus. “And many that believed came, and confessed, and showed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.” They believed, confessed, made sacrifices. The truth must be trusted; our faith must be sustained by testimony; both faith and testimony must be illustrated by the sacrifices we cheerfully make for the Lord Jesus. The primary obligation therefore is faith. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” It is on Christ. Not on the creed or in the Church or on the Cross, but on the Christ. Jesus is the Way. The way of Faith; the way of Salvation. The obedience of faith is the law of the Christian life. It cannot, however, be too strongly emphasised that Jesus Christ is the object of Faith. The Redeemer is greater than Redemption as a plan; the Saviour is greater than His Cross. We are not saved by the Crucifixion, but by Christ the Crucified. We are not saved by the plan of salvation, but by Him who planned it. The Cross was not the end of Christ’s mission, but rather salvation was the object in accomplishing which the crucifixion was necessary. It is not even the anguish of the Man Jesus

Christ which saves us, but ours is a salvation accomplished by God Himself. Yes, Jesus died ; Gethsemane drank in His bloody sweat ; the wooden Cross has decayed ; the nails have rusted back to dust ; the spear knows no man's touch ; and the soil of Calvary bears no mark of stain. But we believe in Him who survived all these things—*a Living Saviour*. “Behold! I am alive for evermore.”

It was this Way of faith that created the tremendous stir in Ephesus. There will be strength in such a faith to make a stir anywhere. There is always strength in such a faith. In this day it will stir men's pulses and fill with energy the throbbing heart. In the past, it has nerved its possessors to stand unawed in flames at the stake, and shrink not back in sight of the glittering axe. Crowned heads, with empires behind them, and armies and navies, have oft commanded such believers to curse the name of the Christ and live, but all in vain ; their sight was so long and strong, they believed, and endured, as seeing the Invisible ; so before these haughty Kings, they saw Jesus only, and were transfigured by the sight, and they could toy with the instruments of torture, and smiling at the fiats of these Kings, they hugged the very flames and made them their chariot to the palace of their Lord.

*Confession* is an obligation of the truth. It is right that we should testify our faith in the Lord Jesus. “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” No man can truly fulfil the obligations of the truth without the confession. It must be the constant testimony of the grace of salva-

tion. A witnessing church is a winning Church. There is always a gracious power in the open acknowledgement of saving faith. Jesus still challenges all who believe in Him:—"Whom say *ye* that I am?" The honour that Jesus gave to Peter in His response to the great confession, was the instant award of Christ to the fidelity of His servant. Jesus invariably honours His servants who faithfully confess Him. All the martyrs told of Christ. They were His witnesses. So precious are they forever in His sight, that He preserves the memorials of them near Him, beneath the altar. All the saints have the sacred charge of Jesus' name and honour. "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Literally, the testimony of Jesus is *the life of the Church*.

*Sacrifice* must show the faith and sustain the confession. Both trust and testimony must be illustrated by the abandonment of all sin, by renunciation of self, and by the consecration of all we possess to Christ. In this manner only can Christ be made illustrious by His people. Sacrifice for Christ is an obligation of the gospel. At Ephesus they burnt their books. What a glorious scene! What a holy fire! The very embers would be precious dust in the sight of our Saviour. It was the Queen of Madagascar who, when she became a Christian, poured the rum she received as revenue into the sea. Such an act illustrates Christianity. It is easily understood. It always reveals a true and radical conversion and declares a strong and sublime fidelity to Christ. It is more potential than years of preaching. The fire at Ephesus was mightier than the miracles of Paul. When believers in Christ confess-

their past evil deeds, and testify to present saving grace, by destroying the very instruments of sin and burning their dearest idols ; making blazing fires of their unholy books, they prove the supernatural character of the religion they have embraced. With such sacrifices God is well pleased. They reveal the loyal heart of trust and love. The truth sustained by such sacrifices would create a grand stir throughout the world. Our present sacrifices can never make illustrious our faith or life. So many are like the old Chieftain, who, when he was baptised kept his right arm out of the water that he might still work his deeds of blood. It must be all for Christ. What altar ever before so sanctified the gift ? The widow's mites laid on that altar are magnified and glorified as well as sanctified. They grow into shekels of the sanctuary, precious as gold, pellucid as crystal. And when self is laid on that altar, the fires of God fall on it, and instead of consuming it, they illumine and transfigure it with celestial glory. Animated by such heroic, intrepid, exalted sacrifices, life will be irradiated with the brightness of immortality. Power will be glorified. Money itself will take on something of the beauty of Heaven, shining, as it were, like bits of the golden pavement in the City of our God.



## DIVINELY-APPOINTED PROGRESSION.

BY REV. JAMES PICKETT.

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“ And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto Me ? Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.”—*EXODUS* xiv. 15.

THE command was sharp, short, imperative ; while in the Divine interrogation which introduces it, there is the ring of a rebuke. At first sight, it seems strange that prayer should be deprecated by God, even indirectly ; but at that juncture even prayer was ill-timed, and not the thing which was most clamant. We need oft to be reminded that one great spiritual pursuit may never be made the substitute for another ; and, though few things in life can be of greater value and force than prayer, and more things are wrought by it than this world dreams of, even prayer may be inopportune. When the time for daring deeds comes, prayer may be misplaced if it fill the fleeting moments to the exclusion of the thing which at that point is even more important. So the searching query comes, “ Wherefore criest thou unto Me ? ” That point in the march of this emancipated people towards fuller freedom was indeed momentous. The period was critical, charged with great issues : and an imprudent step then, might be fraught with fearful

disaster. The time had come for prompt, decisive deeds. What those deeds were, was quickly and unmistakably indicated; and the stirring Divine command opened the way to finest inheritances.

It is a piece of old history, graphically told, and not without the weightiest lessons for the rushing life of to-day. If it be true that history repeats itself; that the crises of one generation find their reproduction in the life of many another which follows; and if it be also true that God's dealings with one people are full of education to their successors, then we shall act wisely if we give good heed to this apparently peremptory utterance, and note carefully the voice which makes it.

The thing we need to see is, that it was a definite, and at the same time, a gracious Divine demand. God spoke. Had they known all that was involved in that, and had they been all they should have been, that would have been enough, and would have absolutely and finally settled the question. And God often speaks. This is one of the gladdest facts in life. That is one of the most dangerous forms of scepticism which either assumes or asserts that great Divine revelations are closed with the completing of the sacred canon, the Book of Books. Happily, God continues to speak, and all life is made rich by the revelation and filled with new charm because of the cheery speech. God speaks; and the fact cannot be too indelibly impressed upon us. All too often 'tis true that we do not hear, and we laugh contemptuously at those who say they do. It is easy enough to sneer at the elect spirits who declare they hear God speak to them, and to dub them "mystics;" but have we ever realised the immense debt we owe to such hearts? The

men that see visions, that so sedulously cultivate the capacity for listening to God that the first tones of His voice awaken their keenest expectations and stir them quickly to a receptive mood, these are they who put the whole race of us commoner souls under permanent obligation. We have grown materialistic, and the danger is that our sordid materialism shall paralyse our best forces, and keep our life for ever poor. And, all the while, God is speaking. We do not hear, partly because of our haste and rush, partly because of the multiplicity of our preoccupations, partly because of our deplorable sensuousness, tricked by the things we see, believing little or nothing which we cannot handle. Then, how sad it is that we so shamefully neglect the *conditions* which conduce to hearing! Prayer is all too poor and too fitful, while meditation is almost a lost art. We are in danger of forgetting how to "wait patiently" for the Lord; and so the rarest revelations and the choicest music are largely, if not wholly, lost upon us. But, oftener still, we do not want to hear. The demand, if heard, would thwart our small desires and contravene our petty aspirations, and, it may be, condemn our waywardness and selfishness; and so the ears are blocked and the sensitiveness is dulled and the conscience is stupefied, until we are in danger of losing the sense and the faculty by which we hear and appreciate the graciousness of the Divine Speech and the imperativeness of the Divine demand. Yet, did we but see it, the speech of God, though it comes to us in ringing command, is the redemption, as it is the safety, of life. Without it we should blunder on into chaos, and pass into darkness

from which there could be no relief. Thank God, that, notwithstanding our stupidity and inappreciation, He does not leave us without word, or suffer us to fall into the hands of our foes without a clear-cut command as full of grace and of tenderness as it is of wisdom and strength.

Then we need, also, to see that it was a definite Divine demand to follow a Divinely-shaped course. The precision of the path indicated is one of the evidences of the graciousness of the command. Of course, it was difficult, but then it was demanded, and that is the point to be regarded. Besides, what are difficulties if they fall in the track which is according to Divine prescription? We whine about difficulties, all forgetful of the fact that difficulties are but schoolmasters to brave and obedient spirits, and that, by them, such spirits are ever cultured to finer conditions and made fit for larger life and fuller wealth. God prescribed it; and God always clears the way for the fulfilment of His own demands. What are seas and storms to Him, Who "hath gathered the wind in His fists," and Who "hath bound the waters in a garment," and Who "hath measured them in the hollow of His hand?" All nature bows and bends to His behest, and obedient hearts will find that, whatever His demands, fulfilment is possible and profitable. Nor is that all: God ever makes provision for guidance and protection in the course He doth specify and shape. The stars in their courses fight in the interests of God's elect, and heaven and earth conspire to aid the souls that regard the word of His mouth. The pillar of cloud and of fire is ever built and prominent for those who have the eyes to see and the heart to understand. No

lost wandering souls are they, treading a track that is unsafe, and in which there is no shelter from the fury of the storm, and no light to pierce and chase the darkness of the night; for "the Lord God is a Sun and Shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." And what is more: God constantly finds means of confounding the forces which oppose those who step out at His call. "And the angel of God which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them; and it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night." Do you say, "That is miraculous"! Why, God is ever working thus, and in strange, and, to us, inexplicable ways, protecting His people and clearing a course for their advance. And, however subtle and strong the adversaries of the good, He that is for them is more and stronger and wiser and abler than all that may be against them. What appears impossible, He is ever making actual, and, in the eyes of the bitterest foes of His people, He constantly brings the largest triumph to those who love and obey Him, while confusion of face covers those who attack them. If God make the course, 'tis ever safe to follow it; nor must untoward appearances be allowed to provoke the unbelief which is the beginning of discomfiture and shame. With God, the miraculous is not only possible, but easy; and in this, is our hope and safety. We shall be wise if we bend the ear and listen, if we clear the vision and watch;

and when He speaks and moves, to heed and follow. The battle is not ours but God's; but the victory will be ours, because it is His gift: and in the gladness of triumph we shall be permitted to rejoice with a great joy.

But beyond this, it is needful that we should see that it was a definite Divine demand for a Divinely-appointed progression. The call was, "Forward." That is in perfect consonance with the whole plan of God, for "progress" is ever the Divine note. Of course, in the interpretation of this note we require to move with caution and to exercise our keenest spiritual discernment. All movement is not progress; and all progress is not safe. There is a possibility of mistaking religious fussiness and thinking it real advance; and there is also the possibility of merely "marking time" in religious life, and imagining it to be the passage from high things to higher. There may be movement without progress of a real sort and without growth into finer and fuller inheritances. We must mind the movement is Divinely controlled and led; else, we may be plunged into disaster, well-nigh irrecoverable. And if the progress be according to Divine ordination, it is ever safe, and ever from large life to larger still. This, then, is the order: "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." True, there come times in life when the thing to be done, first and most, is to "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord," and this that we may listen, and learn, and be fitted for the onward movement; but standing still as a definite and permanent experience in spiritual life is always the way of spiritual suicide. We must move forward.

“All things journey ; sun, and moon,  
Morning, noon, and afternoon,  
Night and all her stars,  
Twixt the east and western bars,  
Round they journey.  
Come and go ;  
We go with them.”

And if we go not with them,—for God is in them and moving them—we must be swept aside by the on-rushing force and suffer loss, and, possibly, experience disaster. Non-progression means paralysis, and this, ultimately means death. God is ever calling men forward. This is the law of life.

“The old order changeth,  
Giving place to the new.”

Nor should this be a matter for surprise. A moment’s reflection will show us that progression in spiritual life and acquisition are made imperative by the very necessities of the case. Think: we can only *know* a little at a time; we can only *see* a little at a time; we can only *do* a little at a time; we can only *inherit* a little at a time. The great things of God are really secured only as we have capacity for them; and this comes step by step, bit by bit. These great possessions are not reached and realised at a vault; the ladder up which we go to them must be climbed, hand over hand. Fulness of life, wealth of soul, great affluence of spirit, these are not given bodily, finally, completely; unto them we come by following the progression which God appoints. Nor need we remain in doubt as to the indications of the Divine will and demand in this matter. We often ask, “How may I know the Divine will? how may I be sure of the Divine

demand?" This question may be answered by asking, Have we not the Book? *the* Book which of all others declares it? Have we not that other book we call "Law"? and that kindred one we call "History"? and that fuller one we call "Providence"? All these speak with an eloquence, which, with each, is unique and voiceful; and all of them, separately and together, bear to us a message on this matter, clear and incisive. Besides, how shall we interpret the discontent which is always attendant on fuller light and broader education? a discontent which makes us eager in our quest for more and yet more. Who generates the discontent? Are not the aspirations thus bred in us the creation of God's hand? And does not the Divine finger point, unmistakably, in onward directions to experiences which are richer—and to life which is more intense? Over the whole of our existence the Divine word rolls, like a great rallying cry, "Forward;" and he who regards and follows this fine leadership will ever find that the best of life is still in front.

Nevertheless, he is a wise man who is open-eyed to the possibility and the peril of misinterpreting the Divine note, and especially the danger of conceiving that to be Divine which, in essence, is merely human. Ours is an age much fascinated by progress, seeming or real; and our peril is that we should imagine that all that is new is progressive. Often 'tis the fact that the old is decried, and the new idolised and fawned upon. We need to remind ourselves that catch-phrases may convey more of clap-trap than of truth, and, ere we are aware, may betray us into loss and shame and defeat. We who follow God, and are in identification with the Churches

are, ever and again, told we must "move with the times." It may be we must; but it will be prudent to inquire who gives the command. Our function, as godly men, who bear the name and carry the flag of the great Leader, is not to be mere followers of "the times," our business is to make "the times" and move them, rather than move with them. Besides, "the times" may need to be checked, to be bridled, to be balanced, to be controlled, and, specially, to be corrected rather than caressed and followed. Is the progression Divine? Is God at the head of the forward movement? We must make our progress with care, and remember that

"All growth that is not towards God  
Is growing to decay."

In religious experience there are old facts from which 't will be perilous to move; and if we move—and move we must—we must carry them with us; and never move so as to be separate from them. So in religious work, even in the methods of it, care is needed, lest we move from that which is fraught with the widest good. Old principles, old positions, and sometimes old practices even, may be Divine in their genesis.

Still, the Voice speaks, and "forward" is the great law. We move towards the fulness of our inheritance. There remaineth much more to be possessed than that into which we have come. And this progression has its relation to much, and to many things: to personal religious experience; to individual and collective service; to gracious identity with Christ in His beneficent proposals; to social permeation and leadership; to a finer and a more fruitful evangelism. There is larger life ahead, with fuller purity, more abounding health, and

greater power. Progress in all that constitutes true being makes life worth living, beyond all that the most sanguine can dream. And into heartier, fuller, more varied service we must press, a service in which we shall be dowered with strength that is Divine, but, what is more and better, shall have the inexpressible honour of Divine leadership as Christ makes us His companions. Thus being and doing, we may become, yet more and more, the "salt of the earth," the "light of the world;" and for such sweetening and guidance, society cries with piteous plaint, a cry not less pathetic because it comes from the need and the condition rather than from the tongues of men. God ever waits to lead His hosts not only to larger inheritance, but to finer service and greater success. The triumphs of the past days are big with a great inspiration to new endeavour, and at the head of the aggressive and eager companies, God's banner waves and the pillar of cloud and of fire is seen. Leadership in evangelism is not lacking, for God Himself is in the midst of us. And the pillar moves. If we be wise and especially if we be worthy followers we shall move forward; all in rank, all in order, all in step with our great Captain; and as we go, every step we take brings us nearer to that new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness and concord and abundance because it is, indeed, the Kingdom of God.



## CHRIST OUR IMPERISHABLE LIFE.

By PROFESSOR A. S. PEAKE, M.A.

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“Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have not life in yourselves.”—JOHN vi. 53. (R.V.)

It is the distinction of this Gospel that it seeks always in its story of the life and words of Jesus, to pass behind the external fact to the spiritual truth at which it hinted. The miracles are not described for their own sake, but because they are “signs,” through which the mind may read the mysteries of the kingdom. The act in the realm of nature has its counterpart in the realm of grace, for it is the act of Him Who is Lord of both realms alike. Thus the feeding of the five thousand has its significance for John, not in that it was a deed of marvellous creative power, but that it was the symbol of a deep religious truth. It is John, therefore, and not the other evangelists, who gives, as the sequel to the miracle, the discourse on the Bread of Life in which we find its inner meaning disclosed.

To the Jews the idea of bread from heaven was not altogether new. They had read of the manna with which their fathers had been fed through their long years of wandering, and quoted it to Jesus as a challenge

to some greater sign of His mission than the miracle by which He had given the multitude a single meal. But if they had known it, the heaven-sent manna was as nothing to that which their eyes were privileged to behold. For He stood in their presence, Who was the bread of imperishable life. It was not the bread He gave, but the bread He was, that came from Heaven, and surpassed the manna that fed the wanderers in the wilderness. For the manna gave sustenance for a single day, and on the morrow itself became corrupt. It fed a single nation only, and all whom it had nourished were now centuries dead. But He Who never saw corruption, was the Giver of eternal life. He was the living bread for all nations, which would impart to them undying life. But how could those who heard Him believe that He, Whose father and mother they knew, had come down from heaven? Was it credible that He should have come down from heaven? Was it credible that He should be God's bread of life? Let us not blame them overmuch; for we, too, are girt about with the same infirmity. So ready to recognise God's action in the past, so reluctant to confess it in new and unfamiliar forms.

But resentment at His high claim quickly grew to bewilderment. He told them that the bread He would give was His flesh for the life of the world. And when He says yet more definitely that except they eat His flesh and drink His blood, they have no life in themselves, it is only our familiarity with the words, that disguises from us how startling and even repulsive they seem. Yet the language only appears revolting, because it is drawn from a circle of ideas to which we have grown

strange. It is sacrificial language, but the language is not that of atoning sacrifice. For in these words the central thought is not that the victim surrenders its life as propitiation, but that its flesh and blood should be eaten and drunk, that those who partook of it might receive life from it. The most important sin-offerings were too sacred to be eaten, and those of less importance were eaten only by the priests. The type of sacrifice we are seeking is to be found in the peace-offering, in which the victim was used to constitute a meal for the worshippers. If, as seems probable, the peace-offering represents most closely the original form of sacrifice, and thus embodies, to some extent, its original idea, the reference of Jesus to it gains greatly in interest. This will be seen if a sketch is given of the views as to the nature of the earliest sacrifice which seem to have most claim to acceptance.

Sacrifice seems originally to have been a clan feast in which the god of the clan and the clan itself shared. Since the god was believed to belong to the same stock as his clan, a common life was supposed to flow in his veins and in the veins of each of its members. The object of the feast was to keep up the friendly relations between the deity and his worshippers. But along with this there went a more mystical idea. Not only were god and people of the same stock; but the victim slain for the feast was thought to be of the same kin too, and in a sense divine. At this stage of culture men drew no sharp line of distinction between themselves and animals, and each clan usually counted itself to belong to the same kin as a certain animal. It was this particular animal, with the blood of the clan in its veins, that

served as the victim for the clan feast. And when the god and worshipper feasted on this sacrifice, they were strengthening the bond that made them one by this participation in the common life. In this sacrificial feast, then, we have three ideas expressed—the kinship of man with the deity, the mystical communion of each member of the clan with the other members and its god, and the renewal of the common life by common participation in the divine victim.

But it may be asked—Why trouble us with these savage rites? What have we to do with crude heathenism of this kind? We on whom the ends of the ages have come, who have entered into a splendid heritage, may feel that from such types of religion we are an infinite distance away. In Christianity we have the Absolute Religion, the perfect and final truth; and now that it has come, the lower forms have vanished before it. Yes, they live no longer to our faith; but they remain precious to all who would know the place of religion in the life of man. For it is not so much the forms in which it has found expression that are important, as the religious yearnings and instincts for the satisfaction of which these forms were devised. And if we would know what are the unchanging religious needs of the human soul, we shall find them in these aspirations which prompted rites that to us may seem coarse and unspiritual. And just as one of the most powerful arguments for religion is the fact that it is universal in human experience, so it is a powerful proof of the truth of a religion if it can be shown that it perfectly meets those spiritual needs which are native to the heart of man. For just as we believe that the religious instinct was

rooted in the human breast by our Father in heaven, so let us believe that the religion which completely satisfies it comes from the same source. So far from arguing as some have done,—these elements are not new in Christianity, therefore it comes to us with no special claim, we should argue: This very fact proves that Christianity addresses itself to the universal need, and if it can make good its claim to meet it, it is worthy of universal acceptance.

It will be seen, however, that in one respect this sketch reveals a defect. There is an imperfect sense of sin, because there is an inadequate conception of God. When the deity stands little above the level of his worshippers, fellowship with him easily degenerates into good-fellowship. And therefore while there is a charm about the joyousness of early religion and its childlike confidence in the favour of its gods, we feel the lack of that sense of seriousness which comes with the knowledge of things as they are. In Israel this sunny optimism was darkened by the discipline of suffering. Blow after blow struck the unhappy nation, till its calamities culminated in exile. Its great teachers were forced to face a hard problem. Was the overthrow of the nation the overthrow of its God? Far from it! It vindicated at once His holiness and His might. His holiness, for He would not spare the sinful nation, His dear firstborn though it was; His might, for He made great empires subservient to His purpose. The Lord of Hosts was exalted in judgment. So we find a deepened feeling of the holiness and majesty of God; He is the High and Holy One, Who inhabiteth eternity; and along with this we find a consciousness of sin, which led to the great multiplication

of atoning sacrifices. And this, too, had its defect. The old sense of fellowship with God was lost, for He was so far away ; and religion degenerated too often into legalism, fostering a temper now anxious, and now self-complacent. Nor could it be otherwise. The guilt which burdens the conscience bars the way to God, and communion is only possible when the sense of guilt has gone. And for this, Judaism made no real provision. For we cannot but feel how convincing is the criticism—" It is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins." Impossible, in the very nature of the case. Must the problem of religion, then, remain unsolved ? Cannot fellowship with God be won, and yet sin be recognised for what it is and dealt with effectually ? Let us return to the words of Jesus.

In these words He connects spiritual life with eating His flesh and drinking His blood. He thus presents Himself as the victim, slain for a sacrificial feast. The language is, indeed, highly figurative ; but it must not, on that account, be explained away. The most obvious suggestion of it, as of the metaphor of the Heavenly Bread, is that He is the sustenance of men's spiritual life. The bread that He gives is His flesh for the life of the world. When we ask how this is so, we meet with difficulties. But one thing is clear. It is the humanity of Christ that is imparted, as we see from the reference to the Son of Man, and the use of the terms flesh and blood. In a world doomed to death Jesus stands as the principle of a new life. It is Himself that He communicates, and those who receive Him, escape from death. Perhaps we ought not to draw any sharp distinction between **eating His flesh and drinking His blood**. We

take His whole humanity into ourselves, and it becomes within us the nurture of our spirit. Now while Jesus was the Bread from Heaven, He had not yet imparted Himself to men. He speaks of this as still future, and the language of the passage leaves little doubt that He is looking forward to His death, though only as the beginning of a process which finds its completion in heaven. It was in His death that the sacrifice was slain, the body broken and the blood poured forth. And as He had given Himself for men on Calvary, so He gave Himself to them, when He had returned to the Father. The rock had to be smitten before the healing and refreshing waters of life could issue from it, and Jesus had to die that the spiritual forces which were pent up in Him might be set free to bless and save the world. While He lived His earthly life, He was limited by conditions of time and place, now He has become a universal spiritual Presence.

And therefore it becomes possible for each of us to eat His flesh and drink His blood. For these words express in vivid metaphor the blending of His life with ours. Our bodies assimilate food and are built up by it. So we must assimilate Christ, till He becomes part of our very being, the life of our life, and spirit of our spirit. He is the source from which we draw our life as He draws His own from the Father. And the mode in which this is effected is explained as that of mutual indwelling. "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me, and I in him." He uses the same words to describe His own relation to the Father: "Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me." As the Father and the Son live in blessed

fellowship with each other, sharing a common life and crowning their joy with mutual love, so may it be with Christ and ourselves. In this mystical fellowship, wherein the Lord becomes one spirit with us, lies the deepest secret of Christian experience, and the root of all holy life.

We have now reached a point at which an answer to the problem may be attempted. For in the teaching of Jesus we have as its fundamental thought this great truth that God is the Father of men, and that men are His children. Then in the Incarnation we have the supreme manifestation of God's will that men should enter into fellowship with Himself. The gulf between God and man caused by the sense of God's majesty and holiness was bridged in Jesus, not by lessening the sense of His greatness and purity, but by the marvellous condescension in which the eternal Son of God took upon Himself our weak humanity. Thereby He made it possible that we should dwell in Him and He in us. And since He dwells for ever in God, we who have our home in Him, find that it becomes for us a home in God. He is the Divine Victim on Whom we feast, and find the feast the sustenance of our souls. Nor is the realisation of these great ideas of our kinship to God, our fellowship with Him, and the nourishment of our spirits through participation in the slain and ascended Lord, rendered unreal by the ignoring of sin. It is the glory of Christianity that it measured sin more justly, and felt its heinousness more intensely than any religion, not excepting Judaism, and yet was not appalled by it, but grappled firmly with it that it might be done away. **And thus the goal of all religion, our fellowship with**

God has been attained, because the barrier that stood between us has been broken down. Since Christ has died for our sins and been raised for our justification, we are accepted in the Beloved and come with boldness to the throne of grace.

And so Jesus is God's answer to the needs that He Himself planted in our breasts. He has given us the assurance that we are akin to God, and have a destiny worthy of the Source from Which we sprang. And as we have drawn our life from Him, our very nature drives us to fellowship with Him. No lower joys can permanently satisfy the hunger of our souls. We cry out for the living God, and only when we have found Him, have we found abiding peace. It is in Jesus, too, that we have the sacrifice for sin. When He died on Calvary He broke the power of sin, and made atonement for our transgressions. In that death we died and in His resurrection we rose to newness of life. And so in Him, and in Him only we have the answer to the two great questions of religion: How may the guilty conscience be at peace? and how may man find fellowship with God?

In the ordinance, which the Lord Himself instituted and commanded us to observe, we have a means provided whereby these truths may be vividly realised. It is a communion feast wherein we attain a consciousness of our vital union with each other through communion with our Lord. It stirs within us a deep emotion as it takes back our thought and imagination to that awful and mysterious experience wherein He tasted that we might never taste of death; nay, not only tasted but drained the cup to its last and bitterest dregs. And so Death was swallowed up in Victory. It reminds us

how that shedding of His blood won for us the remission of our sins. And therefore when we neglect the Supper, and pass by the table which He has Himself spread for us and where He makes us welcome as His guests, we not only disobey Him, but rob ourselves of a means of grace. Yet let us not forget that it is not the taking of the material emblems in itself that conveys the good. It is essentially the faith whereby we believe that as we receive them, so Christ imparts Himself to us. And where it is not possible for the elements to be received, Augustine's great saying, "Believe and thou hast eaten," will prove itself to be true. But where Christ's command is wilfully disobeyed, can we hope that faith will secure the blessings He has attached to its observance?

I have said that we find in Jesus the answer to our needs. A further question may be propounded—Can He continue to meet them? For this life the experience of others may give us confidence. But for what comes after, how could their experience help us here? Can we be sure in the first place of an after-life at all? Yes, if Jesus is one with us now, we shall share His immortal life. And thus we may speak of Him truly as the bread of immortality. The life that He imparts to us here is not a life that can be destroyed by what we call Death. It is to emphasise this that in this discourse Jesus says so often, "I will raise him up at the last day." But does not the very prospect of immortality terrify us when we think of it? For we can very readily conceive the circumstances in which it might be an intolerable burden. Unless we can be sure that there will be infinite resources to make existence happy and not wearis-

some, we cannot look forward with joyful confidence to endless life. But this condition also is met in Jesus, for in Him these infinite resources are to be found. In Him all heavenly treasure is hidden and all the fulness of the Godhead dwells. And if our fellowship is with Him who inhabiteth eternity, eternity will be to us a blessed home. And there, as here, our life will still be sustained by that Bread which came down from heaven and will be our Bread of life for evermore.



## THE NEED OF THE HOUR.

By REV. S. FLANAGAN.

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“Who gave Himself for us.”—TITUS ii. 14.

“Such as I have give I thee.”—ACTS iii. 6.

“Ye shall receive power.”—ACTS i. 8.

EACH of these scriptures illustrates a principle which I would endeavour to emphasise and enforce in this address. The truths they teach are the need of the hour. Listen for a moment to the soliloquy of Grantaire in a Parisian wine-shop:—“So there is going to be a Revolution again, is there? A Revolution, what does that prove? that God is hard up. This poverty of means on the part of God astonishes me. In His place I would work more simply. I would not be winding up the machine every minute. I would lead the Human Race smoothly. I would knit the facts stitch by stitch without breaking the thread. I would have no emergency. What we fellows call progress moves by two springs—*men and events*.” In the last clause we have the clew to life’s emergencies, revolutions, and divine crises. God has oft to wake the world up by a baptism of blood, and the Church by a baptism of Fire. God would rather complete the fabric of a Perfect Humanity “stitch by stitch.” But He works through men. Man is the medium by

which God crowns and consummates His ideas. But souls become obstructed, and tempests are needed to clear them. Greed, worldliness and base materialism cloud the spiritual atmosphere. God clears it by a storm. Desolation is the result. Yes, but all things are clearer and sweeter afterwards. The ministry of love would have no tears, no pain, no death. These are the accidents of time, not the essentials of eternity. But the crushed Hand must sometimes glove itself with steel to crush the viper. Given sin, God must accommodate Himself to the race if He would save it. That accommodation and limitation receive their highest exposition at the Cross. The Cross is a lever by which man must either be crushed or raised. But humiliated or crowned, man chooses his own destiny. Man is God's first thought and last. The shaping of his body in Eden was the time-revelation of an eternal Idea. God builds worlds for time, men for eternity. In the spiritual masonry of the soul no untempered mortar is allowed. Temples by miracle may be built in "three days," but men require the cycles of the suns.

Brothers, you who have been called and chosen, to whom are given the credentials of a divine faith, and through whom the divine ideas must be actually realised among men; mark, learn, and digest the order of events and the possibilities of the hour. The time has come for heroic Christianity, not for a favoured few, but for all. The world is hastening on. The night cometh, or the day—WHICH? The answer must be our own. Let us close ranks and march. The world is moving swiftly. The ideal of to-day becomes the actual of to-morrow. There will soon be no more sea. Democracy

is playing havoc with all social distances. Pretension and pride are poor capital in the judgment of the present. Terms which divide men are becoming beautifully less. Humanity is the Family: the World is Home. If we do not conquer the vice and shame around us, we must be conquered. There can be no compromise in this war. It means utter defeat for one side or the other. The race is a solidarity. The "Word made Flesh" makes all men Brothers. Every man's sin is my disgrace; every man's goodness is my glory.

With these thoughts before us let me now repeat the first scripture,—"Who gave Himself for us." On that word I base THE DEMAND FOR CONSECRATION OF THE RICHEST PERSONALITIES AND NOBLEST GIFTS IN THE CHURCH TO THE LOWLIEST SERVICE.

I do not say *lowest* service, but *lowliest*. God's work in some spheres may be lowly, but it is never low. Christian labour in all its details is immortal. No service can be done for Christ's dear sake, but what the heart which knows the "touch of it" can find sweet music. Every impress of the spirit is eternal. The radiance of eternity plays about every life. The soul may be defiled and foul, it may have burrowed down deep amid the awful grime of evil, but to redeem it,—think of God's descent from throne to scream of hate and sweat of blood. He "descended," therefore He ascended. For God and man there is the same law—ascent by descent. We rise no higher than we stoop. The way up to Heaven is *down*. Theology which would glorify God at man's expense is poor stuff. Eternity will show that man is worth the price God paid for him. It is our contempt of human nature which leads

to a smug religionism. We base much of our estimate of human life on such things as appearances, position and wealth. But a man, though poor and foul, in God's sight is still a man. For the aristocracy of the gloomy court and crowded slum I plead. Not for cash, but men and women, sanctified, gifted, cultured. You have tried the pampered crowds of the West, why not now try your hand with the populations of the East? One supreme need is *descent* in Christian service. The high places of the Church are full; thank God, there is room *lower down*. Sanctified talent is dying of inanition. We require less star-gazing and more feet-washing. Spiritual astronomy is all very well, but we must dispense with the telescope when the sewers need cleansing. Christian culture thinks too much of itself in these days. It can do very little without a popular Church and £500 a year. The glare of day is more congenial to it than the shadows of obscurity. Publicans and sinners are shunned for the society of fashion and wealth. We need a nineteenth century John Baptist to call Christian culture and philosophy to repentance.

The man "clothed in purple and fine linen" failed to perceive any relationship between himself and the beggar at his gate. Yet Lazarus was the test of the rich man's character. His poor diseased body was the hinge on which the rich man's destiny turned. Lazarus held the key of eternity. Cared for, he unlocks the gates of bliss; neglected, he opens the gates of doom.

One day Jesus and His disciples encountered a man who was born blind. The sightless eyes awakened no sympathy in the breasts of the latter. The man's affliction to them was only interesting as a subject for a theo-

logical discussion. The problem of his blindness, however, was too difficult for them to solve. They referred the question to the Saviour in the words: "Who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" "Neither," said Jesus, "but that the works of God might be made manifest in him." Or, in other words, that Christ might have the pleasure of coming that way and healing him.

Lazarus is at the gate still. The blind are all around us. The Church, in this country at least, is clothed in purple. Her sky is blue. Her way is filled with flowers. But on her doorstep lie the festering crowds of poor and halt and lame. And if she does not more seriously and compassionately consider the question, "What shall we do *for* them?" the million-headed Lazarus will one day be asking, "What shall *we* do with Her?" The attitude of the Church to the world's worst misery makes or mars her character. It will be Her supreme test at the Judgment. The Church which neglects the perishing is forsaken of God. When will our most gifted souls contend for the lowliest spheres of spiritual toil? The millennium will never come until we find as much real joy in the ministry of the slum as the worship of the Temple. The wealthy and the privileged must be served. But Christian service to them will never be lacking. Special advocacy for these is superfluous. I plead for the dumb, driven human cattle, who have neither heart nor power to voice their need. The shepherdless crowds whose hearts, if purified by grace, and their energies turned into proper channels, would make the nation beautiful as the Garden of Eden. Why not send your most gifted men

to the poorest districts? Why not have the "MESSIAH" in a London slum as well as in St. Paul's? The "Hallelujah Chorus!" would sound as well in Old Kent Street as the City Temple. Here is a field for our choirs, soloists, and musicians. But would the common people appreciate such talent? I answer, TRY THEM. The tastes of the crowd are oft more true than the comments of the critic. When Pharisees heard Jesus madly, the common people heard Him gladly. The very condescension implied in such acts as I have mentioned would prove a divine benefaction. Go to the people who neglect your sanctuaries with your grace, your culture, your intelligence; speak to the doubly lost your tenderest messages; perform among them your kindest deeds, and the human nature though brutalised will respond. Consecration means *going down*—down, not merely before an altar of wood or stone, nor even down from the lofty pinnacle of our vain conceit, but down to the lowliest service in the cause of Jesus. This stooping to save is the genius of our faith. It is spirit clothing itself in appropriate forms which makes the truth mighty. God's witness to Himself in human life is the glory of the Gospel. God, not fulfilling Himself in prophecy, not manifesting Himself in Providence, not declaring His power in judgment; God, not as seen in rapt vision by the seer, or discovered by miraculous sign in Nature, but God in Jesus Christ on lowliest levels, suffering, healing, teaching, dying. This is the glory and the power of the Almighty Lord.

Let me now quote the second scripture: "Such as I have give I thee." On that word I emphasise the

DEMAND FOR A LARGE-HEARTED AND MORE LIBERAL  
DISSEMINATION OF SPIRITUAL TREASURE.

Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," says that Henrique, after flogging Dodo, the slave boy, gave him a coin to heal the scar, but that Eva, looking compassionately upon him, spoke a few kind words. The coin of the one froze his flesh, the words of the other melted his heart. Gold is good when it is not god. He who holds wealth holds power. But gold is base compared with the treasures of the Spirit. There are coins of the heart as well as coins of the realm. To possess material treasures may never be our privilege; most of us are too weak to be trusted with riches. God keeps many a man poor to save him from the devil. But if we are Christians, we are heirs to all the fulness of God. The riches of love, life, and character lie near to each one. And these are the treasures for which the world is waiting. Calvary, not Klondike, will save the world from bankruptcy. The unsearchable riches of Christ's grace alone will heal the world's mighty griefs. "Silver and gold have I none," said Peter, "but such as I have give I thee." Would to God every Christian did the same. Powers unused become worse than useless. Hoarded manna rots. Grace received if not passed on will curse the possessor. In 1848 the Palace of the Tuilleries was sacked by a Parisian mob. The vast treasure obtained was placed in chests and boxes badly closed; some were even half open. From a hundred dazzling caskets shone the jewellery of the Royal House. There was the crown of France. There also was the Regent's carbuncle, a treasure worth 30,000,000 of francs. A company of rag-pickers from the Faubourg

Saint Antoine were told off to watch the treasure. Bare-footed and hungry, these men guarded the crown. At the point of the bayonet they jealously kept from the rapacious crowd the jewels which belonged equally to all. Virtue made their tatters resplendent. Victor Hugo may rightly speak of the incident as "sublime."

But what must we say of those Christians who jealously guard the crown-jewels of God's grace for fear the famishing, dying multitudes should possess the spiritual treasure which the sovereign love of God has made their own? Selfishness dams up the channels in our lives through which the grace of God flows out in beneficent ministries to men. The Christian whose life is not full-orbed is robbing both God, himself, and his brother. I would sooner a man "steal my purse" than my Jesus' rights in his own example and ministry. There is a spiritual economy which is damning. What right has any Christian to restrict the flow of grace into his soul for fear too much should be expected of him in the moral sphere? The wealth of the Godhead lies at each man's feet; let us pass it in its fulness through our lives to others. We need to practise more largely the GIVE-AND-TAKE side of our religion. Take a whole life-full of power every time you pray. Be no longer spiritual misers. Scatter the riches of your life and they shall increase upon you. The power of the Spirit of God applied to the unused forces in the life of the Church would soon win the world to Jesus.

The third scripture is: "Ye shall receive power." On this Word I base the demand for a LARGER APPROPRIATION OF SPIRITUAL POWER BY INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS.

This is the supreme need. Without the power of the

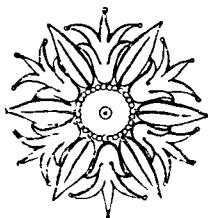
Spirit the leprosy of man will never be touched; the treasure of God will never be imparted. When the Church is spiritually poor, famine is all around. The order of the Saviour's last counsels was, "Tarry until ye be endued with power from on high": then, "Go and preach." Every Christian must tarry. We are only able to *walk* as we wait: we have power to stand because we kneel. We could neither walk nor stand spiritually unless we had communion with God. In Him we live. But do we "Tarry UNTIL?" That word "until" is the emphatic word of the sentence. We pray, certainly; but do we pray until the heavens pour their rain upon us, until we are clothed with power? Is prayer to us a sweet exercise or a great agony? Do we ever, in our secret wrestlings have Gethsemane experience? Do we pray in the conditional or the imperative mood? Do we rest our prayers on a *may be* or a *must*? Be assured that God's imperatives must be met by ours. When the face of the soul turns squarely to the Almighty we may say with Israel of old, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." Divine names and relationships find their complement and crown in human life. In the beginning God named Himself "I AM"; a name which implies the perfection of Deity. That perfection of God demands our perfection—a perfection not of degree but of kind. Perfect love must be met by perfect love. Only this can create perfect correspondence between the soul and God. The command of the Lord is, "Ye shall (or must) be holy, for I am holy." And when a soul, consecrated and cleansed by the blood of Jesus, turns in its snowy whiteness to God

and says "*I am*," it also may say "*THOU MUST*," even to the fulfilment of every letter of the promise.

We have read how full of might the MAN Christ Jesus was. His hands and feet and head—nay, even to His garment—were full of healing virtue. A simple "*Follow Me*" from His lips bound men in life-long loyalty to His service. What was the secret of this power? Was it contained in His ideas—in the imperishable truths which He uttered? No, the secret lay not there. It was in Himself—Himself, not as the expounder of divine truth, or the worker of wondrous miracles, but Himself as the Anointed of God. Filled with the Holy Ghost, every capacity and power glorified by the indwelling Spirit, He became God's truest Interpreter to man. "*I knew Him not*," said John, "*but He that sent me to baptize said, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and REMAINING on Him, the same is He.*" In that word "*remaining*," we have the key to the mystery. In it the secret of Jesus is revealed. There also is discovered the credential of His Godhead; and there, likewise, is the clew to our own spiritual inefficiency. We once tarried at the mercy seat until the fire fell; but now we play at *tip-and-go*. We forgot to "*tarry*," and so we lost the power. We may be learned, but we are lifeless; eloquent, but we are weak. We try to raise the dead with the Prophet's staff, but without the Prophet's might. The devils of the nineteenth century laugh us to scorn because we have lost the secret forces of Pentecost.

Brothers, let us go back to the UPPER ROOM and a personal Pentecost. The Holy Ghost is not a spent force. God is neither old nor infirm, nor "*hard up*." The

might of the Spirit is nigh *us*. He broods over the chaos of our hearts, watching the opening of any door that He may enter our life. Let us cast ourselves with a holy abandon upon His mercy and power that from henceforth He may use all our powers for the glory of God and the salvation of men.



## FATHERS AND CHILDREN.

BY REV. WILLIAM MINCHER.

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“God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac.”—*GEN. xlviii. 15, 16.*

THIS is a fine instance of a godly ancestry, entail and succession. Jacob speaks of his own sire and grand-sire, while clasping hands with his sons and grandsons. Here is an old man, whose life had been full of remarkable providences, recalling the saintly names of his fathers, and adding to them the weight of his own religious experience and testimony, that he might the better enjoin upon his grandchildren the duties and benefits of a godly life.

Around that death-bed of the Patriarch, in memory and in fact, were four or five generations of pious successors. To him the past is present, and the future is near. The past, as he thinks of Abraham and Isaac, moves him to thankfulness. The future, as his trembling hands rest upon the heads of Ephraim and Manasseh, inspires him to hope and prediction.

He would gather the accumulated advantages of a saintly past, and put them into the hands of his grandsons, and make them the trustees of a noble succession.

We see how Jacob speaks of his ancestors, and of his own life. He remembers what God had been to them, and to him. This becomes to him the ground of confidence, that God will be as much to his descendants; and hence that they may find in God all that he and Abraham and Isaac had found Him to be to them.

There is a beautiful blending of memory and hope in this last hour of the Patriarch's life. His thankfulness bursts into prayer, and hope lights up the path he desires his grandsons to walk in. And we can but faintly guess the swelling and various emotions in the breast of this old pilgrim, as falteringly, tearfully, and yet hopefully, he prays, "Bless the lads, and let my name be named on them, and the name of my Fathers." By which he means, let them be considered my sons, and the children of my ancestors. Though born in Egypt, and of an Egyptian mother, may the patriarchal name be preserved by them, and the spirit of their Fathers live in them, and may the grace and covenant enjoyed by my Fathers, and inherited by myself, be renewed in them.

To these old saints godliness was not a private possession, or a mere personal equipment and adornment; it was a kind of patrimony. God was not simply thought of as the God of the individual, but of families and of successions of families. Radiant with hope is this fact of a possible perpetuity of godliness in families. Too little importance and concern have been put on this in the past; and in the present we hardly conceive its vast value and issues. Evangelism has been the battle-word for generations, but too inadequately and tamely has

the church comprehended her possible strength from within, as well as extension from without.

It is impossible to overstate the necessity, and overrate the obligations of evangelism ; but it is possible to underestimate the possibility of domestic godliness, and an unbroken line of religious descendants. One generation is the natural offspring of another. And these family relations, ties and laws, Christ has consecrated ; and will yet capture on a larger scale and make them His mightiest means of establishing the Christian Faith in the earth.

There is a sense in which ancestors are the glory of posterity, and descendants a crown to their Fathers. But this can only be correct when parents truly realise their mission, and their offspring use their privileges worthily. Around the brow of a godly parentage is a chaplet whose leaves never wither, and in worthy children is a treasury of pardonable pride and joy. It is written, "The glory of children are their fathers." "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children." "The promise is unto you and to your children."

Not only does nature bind our children to us, but so also does grace. A religion which does not embrace our children cannot be Divine. Family godliness adds additional charms to the piety of individuals. Religion shines best in the family. Here her tenderest voice is heard, and her sweetest ministries are to be seen.

In speaking thus, we are not even hinting that Divine grace is an inborn thing. Godliness is not a matter of blood or birth. Religion is not hereditary. And yet, it only seems reasonable that children of religious parents should be more disposed to be religious, and should find

the pathway to a godly life easier than those who have been differently situated.

Let us look more closely at the privileges and responsibilities of a godly ancestry. For those of us who have been so blessed can never appreciate to the full our heritage, and those who have not been so circumstanced cannot even estimate their loss. However, a few points will indicate the directions in which such an inquiry may be pursued.

#### I. A GODLY PARENTAGE MAKES RELIGION TO BE FAMILIARISED TO US.

To the children of pious fathers religion is no new thing. It does not come to them as a novelty. They were born into circumstances and surroundings produced by their parents' piety. And as the children of such parents they have lived in the presence of godly object-lessons daily. The noblest that was in some of our parents was nurtured and intensified by their religious faith. Whatever they were natively, or by education, or diligence, all was enlarged and enriched by their godly lives and devotion. The tenderest in our homes was planted and guarded by Christian principles and influences.

It is thus seen how children in religious households are early acquainted with, and accustomed to, the precepts, discipline, and atmosphere of sacred things. To such, a religious life is no mere experiment. They do not see its movements from the outside, but are introduced into its inner chambers. They are not left to guess, but they dwell hourly in the joy of its benedictions, and are confronted constantly by the most con-

vincing and beautiful of all religious evidences, that is, a godly example.

Then, consider what a fine advantage it is to see the influence of religion in all the varied experiences and seasons which enter into the composition of family life! These manifold and diverse experiences will be as so many means of expressing the hidden treasures of real godliness; or as so many facets reflecting its various beauties and brightness. Home piety bears its several fruits in every season, however conflicting and alternating; these become to those in the household perpetual reminders, reasons, and incentives to make their parents' God their own.

## II. A GODLY PARENTAGE FACILITATES THE GODLINESS OF CHILDREN.

The children of intelligent Christian parents begin life with a stock of good qualities which, generally speaking, are not otherwise found. The power of a genuinely godly father and mother, directly, indirectly, and remotely, is peerless. And their character, example, and influence are among the priceless things, incalculable and unmeasured. The fact is, every man who nourishes his soul with noble thoughts, and who is endeavouring to build himself Christianly and spiritually scatters blessing and bounty all along the pathway of life; and such endeavours contain the prophecy and moral certainty of passing on advantages and obligations to posterity.

There are multitudes of men whom death silenced long years ago, but whose influence is still in operation; for their descendants to this day retain the beliefs which made them strong, and evince the same characteristics

which made them distinguished and useful. And some of us have had fathers, long since passed away, whose godly spell is still on us, and whose saintly memories are among our costliest possessions.

In many directions we know the advantages of precedents, usages, and types. It is an immense benefit to travel a road which has been paved, and to walk a path where there are footprints. This is no less true and valuable religiously. It is much easier to follow than to lead. The religion of thousands is not a tortuous seeking; it is a happy following.

Religion does not prohibit personal inquiries, investigation and contesting. Godliness does not suppress a man's individuality; but the rather, ennobles and intensifies it. Yet we cannot close our eyes to the fact that our godly fathers have solved many a difficulty, fought many an enemy, laid bare much danger, and opened up much possible good for us; all this, unless we prove our unwisdom, we shall take advantage of, and turn to great personal profit. There is no need for us to be doing battle with foes which have been beaten by our fathers. Their experience should mean something to us. They will be able to advise us as to perils, and direct us as to the way to be taken; and so, much circuitous wandering may be avoided, many dangers averted, loss of time prevented, and endless pain and shame saved us.

### III. A GODLY PARENTAGE CONTAINS THE PROMISE OF A RELIGIOUS SUCCESSION.

Children are not born into godliness by a natural generation. Men do not become spiritual "by the will of man, nor by the will of the flesh," but by a Divine

birth. Still, religious paternity possesses the *likeness*, and treasures up the hope that its offspring will be godly also. For it is supremely anxious and watchful, and ever prays for such results, and at the same time uses the best, and every means in its power to produce such ends.

As the parents of the world are most anxious concerning the material and social good of their children, so this is one of the chief distinguishing traits of real godly parents, that they endeavour to impress their children, that to be godly should be their first and most continuous effort.

Most parents seem content if their sons and daughters gain positions and win possessions of a worldly sort; but these are paltry things to godly men, if there is wanting the nobility which Christian faith confers. The Christian father and mother are aboundingly concerned that their children should become Christians. "They have no greater joy than to hear that their children walk in the truth." Their crown of rejoicing is not that their children pass their examinations with honours, win scholarships, wear laurels of renown, and build fortunes; but that they early choose the Lord's service, and walk in ways well pleasing to Heaven.

We are not wanting in appreciation and admiration of cleverness, ambition, and successes, where our sons and daughters compete for posts and positions which challenge ability and industry, energy and emulation. But, perish your prizes, wither the wreaths of your fair renown, and crumble to dust your thrones of honour, if your children think more of them, and strive for them more strenuously than for the crown of goodness, and the rewards which God bestows upon worthiness of character.

Let only our sons and daughters “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” and we will trust Heaven with all the rest, and be thankful, and even satisfied with the smallest dowry of a material sort for them. Though they build no great fortune—wear no coronet of fame, and carve no name to be held in boast among men; yet our holiest prayers shall be answered, our best hopes shall be realised, and our cup of joy, as concerns them, shall be brimful.

Happy are those godly fathers whose children follow in their consecrated footsteps. Blessed was Abraham finding Isaac following him—David to be succeeded by Solomon—Hannah to call such an one as Samuel her child—Lois to have Eunice for a daughter—Eunice to have Timothy for a son—and Susannah Wesley to give to the world and the church two such men as John and Charles. This is the true divine order and succession. This is the exception which some day will become the rule. This is the method by which the church in coming time will gain her wealthiest sources of addition, and this is the weapon by which evil will receive its deadliest wounds, and completest and most speedy banishment from among men.

Evangelism will multiply beyond all our present fancies, her resources and ministries, until every corner of creation shall echo with the music of God’s Gospel. The gospel of salvation will yet see greater marvels of conquest than she has inscribed on her pages of history. But there is what has been called “the increase of the Christian stock” by nurture and growth—“the out-populating power” by heredity and education; and by what we are now calling family succession.

Domestic continuity in godliness is not merely possible but is promised, and so is it to be expected. Children succeed their fathers in name, business, position, and material legacies. And is it to be thought a thing incredible that our children follow us in Christian profession and service? There has always been a great and historic succession in noble life and toils. The line of godly witnesses has never been broken, and the kinship of saintly workers has threaded the ages in one hallowed fellowship of purpose. But not simply historic links and successions—age-long brotherhoods and world-wide fraternities, there will be closer and more intimate processions, “instead of the fathers shall be the children.”

The godly name, spirit, and service will yet become the choicest and wealthiest elements in our homes, and they will be passed on to those born unto us; these shall be accepted in all their sacred responsibilities, and even held and continued by them with a greater loyalty and fervour than we were capable of. This condition of things will be more generally realised, when parents better comprehend their duties towards their children—when churches better grasp their sacred opportunities in relation to young life, and when our sons and daughters are better awake to their solemn privileges and obligations, as inheritors of so much which has grown out of their godly connections.

Godly parentage contains and passes on a godly heritage. Part of this inheritance children share in involuntarily. They are born into conditions which are the fruitage of their parents’ piety. Even godless men—men who ignore, and in some instances scorn religion,

pluck fruit from trees which pious hands have planted, and participate in bounties which godliness has diffused around them. So the devotion of our fathers has benefited us without our consent, and in many cases without our appreciation, or even acknowledgment. We do not become complete heirs of this religious inheritance, only willingly and by deliberate choice. It is possible to eat bread we are not thankful for and gather advantages without recognising and owning the source whence they spring.

To enter into this untold possession of godly entail we must voluntarily and whole-heartedly accept their holy precepts, receive their pious counsels, and follow their sanctified examples. Then only shall we enter into the inestimable heirloom of the promises and provisions and prospects of that covenant of grace made to godly fathers in the interests of their righteous seed.

There is an inconsistency, if not shabbiness, in trading upon the good name, appropriating the labours, and reaping the indirect bounties of our fathers' piety, while being negligent of our fathers' religion, and giving our fathers' God no place in our love. The religion of our sires largely made them what they were. They were industrious, temperate, thrifty, kindly, and manly; and they would be the first and loudest to assert that it was their faith in God which aroused their energies, broadened their sympathies, and nurtured what of nobleness was in them.

And he must be ungrateful and bold, if not presumptuous, and takes into his hands grave responsibilities, who ignores those qualities, and scorns those principles which lie at the base of the worthiest which

was in his parents' life, and turns his back upon the God whom they served. Is it not practically to say, "we are wiser than our fathers," "our fathers were deluded men," "we can do well enough without our fathers' God," "we will live our lives after our own pattern, and according to our own plans and impulses"?

So much may not be intended ; but it may be resolved into this. It may be an extreme way of stating the case ; but this is what it means in its under interpretations, and final analysis. He who slights the religion of his home, and forgets his father's God, breaks the family succession—paves a new path of disobedience—continues the fall of the race, and, perhaps, commences another family of sinners.

Young friends, the God of your fathers will not force Himself upon you ! You can prohibit Him from your thoughts. You can exclude Him from your lives. And you can live your days *godlessly*. But you know you can shut out the light of the sun, and dwell in darkness—you can shut out the fresh air, and live in a poisoned atmosphere, made so by your own foul breathing. Or, you can banish the darkness by admitting the light—you can live in refreshing air by opening the windows and doors to give it welcome.

The evil is only excluded by giving admittance to the good. Welcome God to your thoughts. Think of Him until thoughts of Him flood your being, and give colouring to every desire—moulding to every affection, and momentum to every service. Give Him a place in all your plans, schemes and pursuits. And strive with a set and deliberate purpose to be worthy of your inheritance, as children of godly parents.

At your peril and infinite loss, will you break down the hedge of godly influences, restraints and prayers which they have planted around your lives. "*He that breaketh through a hedge a serpent shall bite him.*"

Then do not tempt yourselves by even looking over these godly fences. It will be everlasting to your good, never to know, experimentally, what is on the other side.

We can tell you what is outside. There is the far-off country—the way which seemeth right, but the end of which is death—the cesspools where depraved men wallow—the gardens under whose flowers serpents lie curled—the orchards where the fruits of Sodom grow, fair to look upon, but which become ashes in the mouth of him who plucks—the swine-troughs, where in vain men strive to feed their hunger—the impoverishment, degradation, and shame which contain an infinity of misery.

All this you may be spared by being true to your father's God. On you, now, we urge this solemn charge, and try to open up to you the glorious prospects and possibilities which may become yours. Appreciate, respond to, and accept the blessed privileges and obligations of your position. Ye are the children of ten thousand prayers—the subjects of our intensest concern, and the objects of our holiest hopes. Look up into the smiling face of God and say, "Our fathers trusted in Thee, and Thou shalt be our God for ever." "Thou shalt guide me by Thy counsel." "Thou shalt be the guide of my youth."

Some of you are the children of parents who have passed into the skies. Are you living worthily of their

hallowed memories? Are the unnumbered prayers they offered for you still unanswered? Are the ways of your life such which they would advise and commend? You can never really hope to meet them in the “city which hath foundations,” unless you follow them.

Some of you are the sons and daughters of fathers under whose love and care you daily live. You are baptised by their tears, encompassed by their prayers, and consecrated in their intentions and hopes.

Soon their voices will grow trembling with age, and become silenced in death—soon, their hands will, through the weakness which the years bring, or the palsy which comes at last, even to strong men, lay down their God-given tasks, and thrice blessed will they be, and tenfold happy will you be, if you perpetuate their faith and continue their work.

As your fathers fall out of the ranks of honoured toilers, be you prepared to take their places, and as the standard drops from their enfeebled grasp, rush you to it, keep it from trailing, and bear it to some nobler height.

“ When soon, or late, we reach that coast,  
O'er life's rough ocean driven ;  
May we rejoice, no wanderer lost,  
Unbroken *families* in Heaven.”



## THE MOTIVE FOR CHRISTIAN SERVICE.

BY REV. JOHN SMITH.

*(Printed as spoken.)*

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“For My sake.”—MATT. v. 11.

I HAVE taken these words for our present meditation because they will enable me to say some things about a side of Christian life which is too much overlooked, both by preachers in their sermons and authors in their books. We hear a good deal in these days about the doctrines which we ought to believe, the forms which we ought to observe in our worship, and the methods which we ought to pursue in our saving work; and we are likely to hear a good deal more yet, and perhaps we cannot hear too much about these things. Free, manly, healthy controversy about matters of faith and practice is infinitely better than corrupting stagnation. But we are too apt to forget that there is something behind our beliefs and ceremonies and methods,—something out of which they spring, by which they are sustained, and which gives them tone and colour and value in the sight of God—and that is just the motive which inspires and dominates them.

It is possible for a man to do the noblest deed from the most ignoble motive, and for the most ignoble end. I may, for instance, give a sovereign to a poor man in distress. That in itself is a noble deed, but it may be prompted by the meanest of motives. I may give it with a view to self-glorification, or to obtain a name as a charitable sort of man, or with the design of securing the poor man's vote at a Parliamentary election ; aye ! even at a church election. Now the sovereign is of the same intrinsic value to the poor man, it will buy as much goods in the shop or the market, whether he receives it at the hands of an angel or a demon. But the value of the gift to the giver himself, in the reckoning of Almighty God, depends absolutely upon the motive which prompted it.

Hence I am going to take the position that the life-long work of a Christian man is the purification of his motive power : its purification from all the foul, disfiguring colours of vanity, ambition, and covetousness. I will venture to affirm that any Christian man who watches himself closely will find that mixed motives are his real besetting trouble. We hear much about purity of heart. Did you ever ask yourselves, what is purity of heart ? If you will track the thought to its ultimate, you will be compelled to conclude that it consists in purity of motive, and in no other thing. Life is so sternly logical. The pure motive makes the pure man ; the pure man makes the pure service. The grace of God itself in a Christian man takes the form of a living and controlling motive which moulds his character, shapes all his activities, and determines his destiny.

I invite you to consider these simple words of Jesus

Christ as revealing to us the supreme motive for Christian service.

### I. ITS NATURE.

The nature of motive is generally a difficult thing to deal with; so confusing and baffling. It is generally complex, and often the synonym of mystery. The moment you come to the consideration of the question of motive, you enter the region of uncertainty. The most hidden thing about a man is just the motive that rules him. Hence it is always necessary to be careful and cautious in ascribing motives to any man. And yet, in the case of some men the dominating motive is no secret at all. It lies on the surface. It is read and known of all men. The motive of the miser never baffles you. You know he means money. His supreme happiness is found in counting his money-bags, or casting-up his balance at the bank, or viewing a few yards of mud.

You are never confused about the motive of the sensuous man, because it is evident to all that he lives for the sake of pleasure; or the motive of the ambitious man, because it is clear that he lives for the sake of fame; or the motive of the despotic man, because he unquestionably lives for the sake of power. And so, whether it be hidden away in the deeps of our nature, or printed in legible characters on the open face of our life, it is there. It works everywhere and everywhen, for it is as old and as wide as the world.

And if we enter the family circle we find that motive is one of the mightiest forces that move the complicated and delicate machinery of our domestic existence. That is a very beautiful and touching story that we read for

our first lesson. *And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake.* And the servants of David found that poor man, Mephibosheth, who was lame on both his feet. And David took him into his own house, fed him at his own table as one of the king's sons, showing the kindness of God unto him for Jonathan his father's sake. To-day the same motive writes the same story, for this is one of the stories that have no end.

You see the orphan boy adopted and educated for the sake of his father; or the tender maiden sheltered and saved for the sake of her mother. And there is no more beautiful thing in the Paradise of God than these sweet domestic charities and ministries, which flow forth from the pure fountain of a God-like motive.

I say God-like motive deliberately. Because if you widen the range of your thoughts and observations you will find that motive runs right through the moral administration of Almighty God over this world, as well as the life of individual men, and the life of individual families. He blesses one man for the sake of another. He blessed the house of Pharaoh and of Potiphar for Joseph's sake. The clouds of fire and brimstone would have floated away from the cities of the plain without discharging one drop of their fiery contents, for the sake of ten righteous men. The judgment, merited and threatened, against unfaithful Jerusalem was suspended and deferred again and again for David's sake. Aye! there is a Man in the heavens for whose sake God blesses every other man born into the world. Your sweetest rest, your deepest peace, your brightest hope, come to you for the sake of the Christ who loved you, and died for you, and rose again.

## II. ITS SOURCE.

There can be no doubt, then, about the existence and nature of motive, nor that a pure and God-like motive will give force and fruit to Christian life and service. But from whence does it flow? What is its spring? We need not travel beyond the limits of these three words to find the eternal fountain of the most imperious force that ever ruled the heart or life of man.

It flows from a personal source: "My sake." It is the blessed peculiarity of Christian life that it clusters round the transcendent personality of the glorified Christ. It centres in Him, it radiates from Him, it returns to Him. The very charm of the gospel lies in the fact that a Person is offered to us as our Saviour and Lord. Spiritual life begins in the reception of Christ by the penitent and believing soul. Faith is the full and joyful surrender by which a man places himself at the absolute disposal of Christ, and the trustful, restful embrace of Christ, and reliance on Him as his present Saviour. It is the marriage of the contrite soul to Christ. This view of Christian life, as a direct and vital relation between the personal believer and the personal Saviour, explains the charming simplicity of Apostolic Christianity, and reveals the secret of its amazing power.

The early Christians saw in Christ a beauty, a grace, a splendour that overcame all the attractions of earthly fascinations. From His glorified Personality they derived superlative motives for the practice of bodily sanctity, and a spiritual morality—an invincible power which enabled them to perform joyfully unwelcome duties, and resist triumphantly welcome gratifications. Is that

dreaming? No! I speak the experience of every man when I say that, motives drawn from a personal source are the purest and mightiest forces that ever influenced a human heart or life, and constitute the strongest moral leverage in our struggle with self and sin and Satan. Think for a moment. Did you never do anything for the sake of a friend, kind, true, loyal? Did you never do anything for the sake of a brother, intelligent, noble, faithful? Did you never do or endure anything for the sake of a sister, pure, tender, gentle girl? Did you never do anything for the sake of your father, industrious, considerate, wise? You are not true men and women unless you have done something for the sake of your mother. When she has spoken to you either in the tones of a living voice, or with a pale face from the grave, and entreated you to resist evil and do good for her sake, what a power! what a protection! that has been to you! When temptation has come to you wreathed with smiles, you have smitten it in the dust for the sake of your mother. You see the point, then. If friendship, or brotherhood, or sisterhood, or fatherhood, or motherhood can be the source of a motive which renders a man almost invincible, and enables him to triumph over all the forces of evil, what must it be to draw a motive from the glorified Christ? Let us realise that He is near, looking into these eyes, searching these hearts, weighing these words, and measuring these actions, then when temptation comes, the thought will rise, instinctively and unbidden, How can I do this wickedness and sin against Him? Or in those moments when life has lost its charm, or work its nobility—when some unpleasant duty stands right before us, like a cross, repulsive, dark, frowning,—we shall recover heart and

hope and sing : *I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me.*

But whilst this royal motive of Christian life and service is derived from the Person of Christ, and we love Him and serve Him because of what He is in Himself, it also flows from our sense of gratitude to Him. We all know what a difference it makes, if, when a man appeals to us for sympathy or service, he can point to some help which he rendered us in the time of need. If he can say : I defended your reputation when it was besmirched by the tongue of slander ; I sheltered you when you were homeless ; I paid the debt for which you were threatened with imprisonment ; then, if there is one spark of gratitude left in our hearts, under the breath of such an appeal, it kindles into a flame, and we run with delight to serve our kind benefactor. *For My sake.* Think what lies behind that appeal. What has He done for my sake ? For my sake He came forth from the blended splendour of His throne, exchanging the crown and robes of His eternal Godhead for the swaddling-clothes of the manger in a stable. For my sake He took up human nature at its poorest and lowest point, assuming the very form and obligation of a servant. For my sake He worked at the carpenter's bench, staining His hands with manual toil, teaching me that all industry is divine. For my sake He taught those principles of a pure morality, showing me how I may carry my heart safely through a crooked and perverse generation. For my sake He entered the great sorrow of Gethsemane, taking that cup of bitter woes and drinking it to the last dregs of burning agony. For my sake He climbed the slope of Calvary, enduring the cross and despising its shame, and covering it with

the propitiation for my sin. For my sake He went down into the deepest darkness of death, trampling death and hell in the dust for ever, and opening the gates of the grave to the tabernacles of heaven. Yes, He has done all this for me. And now He comes to me and says, Do all, give all, suffer all, dare all, for My sake. The appeal is equitable, the equation is perfect.

Why should I keep one precious thing from Thee,  
When Thou hast given Thine own dear Self for me ?

In our dealing with men we pay like with like ; we give kiss for kiss, love for love, blessing for blessing.

My Lord, shall I not love Thee,  
Who gave Thyselv for me ?  
The world may tower above Thee,  
But Thou'rt all in all to me.  
As in Thy bitter passion  
I read my hopes above,  
I'll pay Thee in like fashion,  
And give Thee love for love !

### III. ITS INFLUENCE.

It would be an easy task to show how that, this simple motive, working as silently as the light, yet as resistlessly as gravitation, has inspired and dominated all the great revivals, reformations, and movements in the Christian Church through all the periods of her stormy history. What stirred the old Crusaders to heroic effort, and fired them with enthusiastic devotion ? It was the thought that they were fighting for Christ, obeying His call, winning His smile, and assuring His welcome to eternal mansions, if they bore themselves bravely in that war. What roused the intrepidity of the Covenanters to

struggle for fifty years against royal tyranny and brutal butchery? The secret of their magnificent daring, the source of their steadfast courage, the reason of their calm willingness to die was proclaimed in their battle-cry, "For Christ's Crown and Covenant." The same motive works as mightily in the heart of the individual Christian. You have read the beautiful story of the Princess Eugenie of Sweden. She was sick, and her physician sent her to an island in search of health. There she found a host of wretched cripples, many of whom were incurable. She was moved to pity by their sad lot, and resolved to sell her jewels and build a house where they could have sisterly care and loving nursing. She asked the king, her brother, to give his consent. The king thought she had gone mad. Who ever heard of a princess selling her jewels and becoming a nurse to the sick? It looked like madness. You never do anything in this world till you go mad about it! There was one sentence in the letter which her brother could not forget. She wrote it on paper with pen and ink, but God Almighty wrote it upon his soul. It was my text. Her whole plea was "For Christ's sake." He gave his consent, and the jewels were sold. One day a poor woman died. Slowly lifted up in the bed for the last time, she bent forward to kiss the hand of the princess, and covered it with tear-drops from those fading eyes. Then she fell back and died. Eugenie looked down on her hand and saw those tear-drops glistening in the sunlight, and then lifted her eyes to heaven and said, "Oh, my Saviour! I sold my jewels for Thee, but I have received them back again in the tears of this poor woman, and they were never so beautiful as now." Yes, they all come back

again. You never spoke a kind word of cheer but it came back to you. You never did a kind deed but what it came back to you. You are better, brighter, and broader for every deed of love you have done in the name of Jesus Christ. It is not what you keep but what you give away that enriches and gladdens you. It is not what you hoard, but what you scatter that gives expansion and elevation to life. Many a man would be richer if he had less money. What, then, will be the influence of this motive on Christian character and conduct? Let me state briefly three things:—

(1.) *It will give unity to Christian life.*

I dare say your life, like mine, is subject to many distracting and dividing forces. We are pulled in so many different ways. The claims of home, the claims of the church, and the claims of the world, all set upon us at times like a pack of hungry hounds and threaten to tear us in pieces. You say rightly enough that you are worried. And the danger is that life will lose its symmetry and completeness, and become a broken, fragmentary, inharmonious patchwork. What we need is a strong, central, binding, unifying, ruling principle that will expel all discordant forces and keep the heart and mind and life in free, happy, and harmonious action. Look at the body. Its tendency is to fall all to pieces. Only one thing preserves it; and when that one thing is gone, it will return to dust. Life is the unifying principle of the body. Now, just what life is to the body, this motive is to Christian life and character, the central principle around which they grow into the roundness and ripeness of a sanctified manhood.

(2.) *It will preserve the sweetness of the heart in suffering.*

There has always been a suffering side to Christian life. Christ did not disguise it or conceal it from His disciples. He told them plainly that they would be persecuted, despised, and even hated of all men for His sake. Loyalty to Him meant sorrow, tribulation, and death. And the danger is that we become sour-hearted by suffering. How often sweetness of disposition melts away under the fiery solvent of pain! What we need is something to keep the heart sweet. The natives of Africa, in their own pictorial language, called Bishop Mackenzie, "the chief with the sweet heart." Not the chief who had got a sweetheart, but one whose own heart was sweet. What can preserve the sweetness of the heart in tribulation? Read the narrative in Acts v. for the answer. The Apostles have been "beaten" unlawfully by the old Jewish council. *And they departed from the presence of the council—plotting retaliation, meditating revenge, muttering vengeance?*—No, but *rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.* Suffering nobly borne for the sake of another preserves the heart from bitterness.

(3.) *It will give energy and constancy in labour.*

All Christian workers are tempted at times to wish that they could make their work quiver with the forces of wealth and dignity and power that thrill the palaces of the world. The absolute need in any form of Christian service, is a motive strong enough and pure enough to lift our obligations above the perturbations which spring out of our own follies and sins; a motive that will

inspire us with a zeal that burns all the year round and does not depend upon festive occasions, the brilliant eloquence of public speakers, the admiring reports of the public press, or the sympathy of excited multitudes. A motive, moreover, which renders us independent of the worthiness or unworthiness of those whom we seek to enlighten and save. I do not deny that other motives may have a place and a use in Christian service. The power of society, the sympathy of multitudes, and the clan-spirit of a church may do wonders. Resolutions and reports may provoke to love and good works. The luke-warm may be inspired by the brother consumed by zeal, the cowardly may be nerved for conflict by the brother whose face is scorched by the battle-flame, and the timorous may be emboldened by the calm courage of the brave. But the motive of the text is mightier far than any or all of these. "For My sake,"—they are all human, this is divine; they are all social, this is purely spiritual; they are all mortal, this is eternal. As all lesser lights pale their rays before the rising sun, as all the little waves are swallowed up when the mighty sea breaks in upon them, as man's whispers are drowned when God's thunder shakes heaven and earth; so all minor motives, reasons, and passions are swallowed up in the sublime power and tenderness of this soul-propelling motive of Christian service.

You can apply it all round the circle of Christian activities. I can apply it to myself. On a Sunday morning when the outlook is dull and chill, and there is little prospect of inspiration from the congregation, I can look up and say, I will preach to-day for Him. The Sunday School teacher may say, The children are rough

and rude and unworthy, but He is worthy; I will teach them for His sake. The singer can say,

Take my voice, and let me sing,  
Always, only for my King.

Aye! I can go to the Christian girl living in an atmosphere full of evil suggestions and say to her, Be true, be noble, be pure, for Christ's sake. I can go to the young man standing in the slippery places of life and say, Quit you like a man, stand fast, be strong, for Christ's sake. I can go to the worst man in the world as he wallows in the mire and say, Stand up and be a man, for Christ's sake.

Have I spoken too strongly? Then will you read once more in the Gospel by St. Matthew, xxv. That day has come. The throne is set. The King is seated. All nations are gathered before Him. The great separation is made. The eternal destiny of each separate soul of that mighty throng is about to be fixed. But what is the standard of judgment, what is the principle of separation, what is the law of destiny? *YE DID IT UNTO ME. Come, ye blessed of My Father. YE DID IT NOT UNTO ME. Depart, ye cursed.* That is all.

Those words of recognition and welcome, uttered by lips of inexpressible tenderness and love, will be a rich repayment for all toil and weariness and suffering. May you hear that glad welcome to eternal rest and joy.



## LIFE AT BETHANY.

By REV. W. JONES.

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“Then Jesus, six days before the passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom He raised from the dead. There they made him a supper ; and Martha served : but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him.”—JOHN xii. 1-2.

BETHANY occupies a prominent and distinguished place in Gospel narrative, not because of anything special in the place itself. It sits not on the silver sea, it is no busy emporium of commerce, it has been the scene of no famous battle, it has no monuments of ancient architecture. It is an insignificant mountain village looking out from its solitude on the side of Olivet over the face of the desert. And what it is now it has always been, and yet there are memories clinging to it which for ever hallow and glorify it in the eyes of the Christian world. It is one of those places to which Christ in the later days of His ministry loved to retire. He went to it from the strifes, the unbeliefs, and the controversies of the great city as to a quiet haven from a stormy sea.

In this quiet mountain village there was one family for whom He cherished a special affection, whose guest He often was, and in whose bosom He unfolded truths

which have been the life and the light of ages past, and will be the life and the light of ages yet to come. And Christ in the midst of that family is one of those Gospel pictures which we can never afford to lose. It shows Him to us as the Brother of our race weeping with us over our blighted hopes, sympathising with us in our sorrows, and brightening the dull aspects of our earthly life with His living and loving smile.

Even Christ needed His moments of retirement from the world, the world of conflict and work. He needed them for rest, for the renewal of His physical strength, and for quiet communion with His Father in heaven. And we all need such moments. To be always in the midst of the blinding heat and dust of the struggle of life, to be always in the midst of the storm and the strife, enfeebles us and lowers the tone of our spiritual life. But if our moments of retirement from the world are to be the blessing they ought to be to us, and are intended to be, they must be for more than friendship, they must be for spiritual devotion, communion with God, the opening of the heart to the rich sanctifying influences of a higher world, and for looking beyond this desert of time into the realms of eternity.

A pure sweet happy home is always a sacred place. There life's richest music breathes, there grow the flowers whose beauty makes us glad, and there are the tender ministries of unselfish love. But home with Christ in it, sweetening every cup of sorrow, lightening every load of care, and wreathing every cross with flowers of promise and hope, is a more sacred and delightful place still. If there be one spot of earth nearer to heaven than another it must be a quiet Christian home.

There stands the altar of prayer hallowed with a thousand dear remembrances, and there the Lord commands the blessing, even life for evermore.

In this home at Bethany we see

### I. LIFE HALLOWED WITH THE RELIGION OF CHRIST.

He was honoured, loved, and served in that home. Its inmates were His disciples. And after all, the religion of Christ is the highest distinction and the most beautiful ornament of a human home. We may have in our homes all that art can create and wealth supply. Fortune may empty out her golden horn. Music may breathe its softest witcheries of song, and friendship smile its sunniest smile, but if there be no religion of Christ in it all, the one thing needed to glorify all is lacking. But if Christ be the most welcome and honoured guest in our homes, then, however obscure their situations, and however humble their appointments, they are palaces in God's sight, and He comes into them all unseen by the world, and distributes to their inmates blessings worth more than all the gold and honours of the world.

In this home at Bethany we see *different types of spiritual life*. That was but a small home-circle, a brother and two sisters were all, yet each one had a distinct type of spiritual life. Of Lazarus but little is recorded beyond the fact of his having been raised from the dead, but what is recorded conveys the impression that his spiritual life was characterised by quiet thoughtfulness. Mary's was distinguished for intense devotion to her Lord, and Martha's for busy practicality. This variety of type of spiritual life is true of every Christian

home, and of every Christian Church, which is but the home enlarged. And this variety is in harmony with what we see in the other kingdoms of God. There are widely different types of both physical and intellectual life. This variety of type of spiritual life is mainly the result of the wide differences of mental constitution in the disciples of Christ. The Spirit of God in His operations on the human mind does not destroy its individuality, but purifies it, fills it with His light, and uses its distinctive peculiarities for the advancement of the kingdom of God in the world. Our sanity would be questioned were we to expect the light of the sun shining through a window of many-coloured glass to reflect the same colour in every pane. The light is one, but the media through which it shines widely vary. This variety of type of spiritual life in the home and in the church is as needful for its own full development as it is for the full development of the life of the church as a whole, and for the carrying on of its many and varied activities. But widely as the types of spiritual life may vary, there is real harmony between them, they are all the result of one and the same life of God in the soul. They blend together like the different colours of light in the rainbow, God's arch in the sky, or like the different notes in some sweet strain of music which lifts the soul heavenward.

*These different types of spiritual life developed themselves in appropriate ways.* Of Lazarus it is said that "He sat at meat." It is not much to say certainly, and yet it is a side-light which helps to reveal the man. It seems that he was no talker at the table. He was no windy controversialist, nor wordy debater. He was a

thoughtful observer of all that was taking place around him, looking into the meaning of all and gathering up the lesson of all. Mary would be at the Master's feet. It was her heaven to bask in the more than golden light of His face, and catch the rich music of His beautiful noble words, while Martha went about the house busy preparing for the evening meal. The principal forms in which the spiritual life in Christ's disciples has always developed itself, and always will, come here distinctly into view—thought, worship, and work. There are quiet souls amongst us whom we hardly ever hear. They glide about like the light, and like the light they brighten all they touch, and gladden everybody they come near. From among these quiet souls often come some of the mightiest and wealthiest in the church, those who write our best books, who devise successful plans of church operation, and in many ways help to drill the raw world for the march of mind. There are also men and women who are eminently devotional. Their hearts are aflame with love to Christ. Secluded from the world in communion with God and viewing the landscape o'er, or soaring in mind heavenward on the wings of prayer and praise, they are at home. Their souls are always on the wing, ready to pass away to fadeless bowers on the everlasting hills. The veil which separates heaven from them is so thin that the glory comes through sometimes and transfigures them. And there are also in the church practical souls who must work if they are to live; and give them room for it, for there is plenty to be done. They stir the air wherever they come. Their chosen sphere is the temporal affairs of the church. Their delight is to be at the head of some

aggressive movement, leading the section of the army of God with which they are connected to attack some threatening foe.

*Christ recognised and honoured each of these types of spiritual life.* Of Lazarus it was said that Christ "loved him." Moody and silent as he seemed to others, there was nevertheless something in him which bound his illustrious Friend to him in special attachment. Christ sees the good in all of us. The world looks for the bad, and it blackens the blot and widens the rent. But Christ looks for the good, and wherever He discerns the least dawning of faith, or the feeblest beginning of spiritual life, He brightens that dawn into a perfect day, and strengthens that feeble beginning, and develops that life into vigour and fruitfulness. He accepted Mary's offering which she presented to Him with such wealth and beauty of love. As He sat in the house she emptied upon Him a box of costly perfume. And there were those even among the disciples who would have censured her for her deed, calling it "waste," but He set it in its true light, and gave to it an immortal renown. "Verily I say unto you, that Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." Fame—poets sing for it, statesmen argue for it, warriors fight for it, and travellers seek it in all lands and on all seas, only to find it after all a mocking shadow, an echo which soon dies away. But here a quiet woman in a lonely village in a remote corner of the earth, does a beautiful and generous deed for Christ almost nineteen centuries ago, and her name is still green and fragrant in all the church. Christ sat down at Martha's table

and partook of what she had provided for Him with so much anxiety and care. Here is a lesson we should lay to heart. We often act as if we thought no one's type of spiritual life were true but our own, but Christ sees the good in all of them, and accepts them all alike. Each type of spiritual life is needful to the others. The busy hand needs the thoughtful brain to direct it, the thoughtful brain needs the busy hand to execute its plans, and both of them need the gentle influences of love to sustain and encourage them in their toils and trials. This home at Bethany was—

## II. HONOURED WITH THE PRESENCE OF CHRIST.

He loved to go there. It was to Him a chosen place of retreat, a shelter from the storms of criticism and persecution which beat so fiercely upon Him in the outside world. And what evenings those must have been there! When the busy day was done, and the stars came out in the sky above the mountain top, when the moon poured her silver radiance over land and lake, and the night winds came and went as if they were singing the chafed earth to sleep, and the Friend came in from the city behind the hill, how the world and life must have altered for the better in the view of these disciples! We, perhaps, know what it is to have a quiet, wise, large-hearted friend come in of an evening sometimes when the day's work is done. If we do we can remember how in his presence and in his conversation the cares which have eaten into us like rust all day vanish, and the worries which have stormed and fretted around us

“ Fold their tents like the Arabs,  
And as silently steal away.”

But Christ was more to this family than any merely earthly friend ever could have been, He was the Messiah, the Hope of Israel, the Redeemer of the peoples of the world. We have the table-talk of some eminent men gathered up for us into books, a sort of gold-dust of speech. But what would we give for the table-talk of Christ on those memorable evenings at Bethany? We have a fragment, it is no more, preserved for us, but it is of infinite moral and spiritual worth. When the shadow of death had darkened on that house, and there were hearts breaking and bleeding amid the gloom, He came into it and spoke words palpitating with sympathy and radiant with the light of immortality,—“Thy brother shall rise again.” These simple, beautiful words have brought light, comfort, and healing to millions of wounded hearts. More than the reasonings of the wise, more than the conclusions of logic, more than the analogies of Nature, suggestive as many of these analogies are, they give assurance that we shall rise again from the dead. They make the grave to us a passage leading from light to light through a brief darkness.

Christ found in this home at Bethany what He could best associate with and love. He found *faith* in it, faith in Himself and in the divinity of His mission. In the outside world He was confronted with a stubborn, and, in some quarters, contemptuous unbelief. This unbelief always repels Him, keeps Him out of heart and home; faith invites Him in, honours and crowns Him. He found *love* in it, love to Himself and to each other. The hearts of the inmates of this home were to each other, and to their illustrious Friend, as perfect music set unto noble words. He found *purity* in it. It was free from

the vices which at that time burdened and corrupted the nation, and which were gradually but surely bringing down upon it the judgments of God. It was a time when Iniquity walked unblushingly in the light of the sun, and when the sound of violence was heard in the streets. But this home was free from their withering influences, their blackness of darkness. He found *spirituality* in it. The things of heaven were put before the things of earth, the weighty concerns of the soul above those of the body. We bury our souls in temporal things, and then go muttering about the earth, heaven is a long way off, and so it is to us when we are unbelieving and worldly. But when the soul is full of faith, free from all base passion, and pervaded and warmed with love to Christ, heaven is not far off then. If God were to lift the veil, and a thin veil it is in these exalted moments of being, the wonders and glories of that world would burst on our vision at once.

Wherever Christ finds what He found in this home at Bethany, there He is, whether it be in a palace or in a cottage, a painted hall, or a garret in a crowded city slum. He is not found where fashion reigns and struts in all the colours of the rainbow, nor where sensualism holds its revels, tainting the air with its foul leprosy, nor where selfishness like a freezing blast locks up in coldest ice the streams of human sympathy, nor where unbelief mocks at the awful verities of life and eternity. But wherever there are faith, purity and spirituality, there He is, however humble the home, and however remote it may be from the glare of the world—its glory and its joy. And His presence there fringes every dark cloud of disappointment with celestial light, and makes flowers of

heaven spring up upon and adorn the roughest paths of life.

This home at Bethany was

### III. VISITED WITH AFFLICITION.

This may at first sight seem strange that in this home, where Christ loved to abide, there should come bodily affliction and distress. We somehow quietly assume that our having Christ with us in our life and home ought to exempt us from the ordinary afflictions of human life. But our religion was never designed for any such purpose. It was designed to help us to bear them, to get out of them some spiritual good, and to make them helps to a better life. And this it always accomplishes in the devout soul.

Lazarus, the beloved brother, the human staff of the home, fell ill. The sisters, anxious and distressed, saw the light fading from his eyes, the beauty slowly withering from his cheeks, his strength declining day by day. In their grief they naturally enough thought if the Friend would only come all might yet be right. They knew His power over disease, His wonders of healing were common themes on the lips of the people. They sent to tell Him of the shadow which had darkened on their home and He never hastened His going at all. How mysterious! The dealings of Christ with His most chosen disciples are often to them mysterious, but they are always right. They perplex us and burden us with sorrow, and sometimes try our faith to the utmost; but they are right, as we shall see in the end.

That brother died. Death in the home is a terrible thing. We read of him in books, we hear his footfall in

other homes, but we never really know how terrible he is till he comes into our own, then we feel how leaden is his arm; how relentless his heart; how icy his breath. But after all death in a Christian home is a different thing from what it is in a godless home, in which it is the darkening down of awful night with no star in it. In a Christian home it is a dim twilight it is true, but it is a twilight that heralds an everlasting day. When a good man departs from this world to a better, we say he is dead, but in heaven they say he is alive, born through death into the freer, richer, larger life of eternity. We think of the places where we have often met him but shall meet him no more, and we say he is gone, but on the other side they say, "He is home at last, he has had a hard fight but he has won the victory, a long struggle with the blast and the billow, but he has gained the haven now; a perilous journey through a world full of snares, but after all he has reached the Father's house in safety."

This home at Bethany was honoured and blest with

#### IV A SIGNAL MANIFESTATION OF THE MASTER'S SYMPATHY.

He did come to that home after all, and He came at the right time. The time the broken-hearted sisters put was not the right time. Their impatience would have charged Him with delay. They were in a hurry. Had it been in their power they would have put forward the pointers on the dial of time, and lashed the lingering moments into speed. Christ always comes to His suffering and afflicted people at the right time. There may be seeming delay in His bringing to us deliverance from

our afflictions and sorrows, but there is more of mercy in it than we think. In His apparent delays He teaches us our dependence upon Him, our necessity for calm, patient trust in Him and in the wisdom of His providence, and schools the fretful fever of our impatience into resignation.

I will not with any poor words of mine desecrate that scene at the grave. I will not touch its inimitable sublimity, beauty, and pathos. But that tear in the Master's eye—what does that mean? Among other things it means that when every human heart around us is cold and hard, hard as iron, His heart toward us is soft and tender with divinest, truest sympathy—that when all the earthly refuges in which we have been accustomed to hide in storms of trouble go down in hopeless wreck, or are closed against us, He is always accessible—that when all other helps and helpers fail us in times of sorrow, and the crushed and lonely heart in us bleeds and weeps in silence, He is our unfailing, loving, almighty Helper.

He may not come to us raising our dead to life, but when He comes there will be resurrection, nevertheless. There will be a resurrection from spiritual death. When He is absent, shut out, disregarded, the soul is dead. But when He comes into home and heart and life, the soul at the sound of His voice and the quickening influence of His presence, wakes to life, into a new world, to new fellowships, to a new history altogether. There will be a resurrection from the grave of apostasy to renewed spiritual being. By surrendering ourselves too much to the world, becoming too absorbed in the things of this earthly life, by holding lightly and then neg-

lecting spiritual duties, we sink slowly down from our high position of communion with Christ into practical estrangement from Him, then He sadly departs from us. But when He returns, and He always returns when our hearts invite Him, the soul in us rises up out of its fallen condition, the old life comes back, and the glory of former and happier times is renewed. There will be a resurrection out of the grave of indifference to religious activity. Many professed followers of Christ are found in this grave. They continue their attendance at religious ordinances, they hold, at least in form, their belief in Christ, they subscribe to the funds of the church when called upon, but they cease to be workers. And ceasing to work themselves in the cause of Christ, they soon cease to have any living real interest in the work of others. But when Christ comes to them again, they wake up to find how much they have lost by ceasing to work for Him, and with renewed zeal place all their energies and talents and time at His command.

Oh, ye who keep Christ out of your homes and hearts, ye know not of what blessings ye deprive yourselves. You find room in your hearts for worrying cares, for dark paralysing doubts, and for unholy passions which war against the soul, but none for the Christ who seeks to save you. And yet He stands at the door of your heart all the while waiting to come. And when the door of your heart opens ever so little in some quieter and better moment in your life, His voice is heard gently saying, "Open the door and I will come in to you and sup with you."

The feast at Bethany foreshadows a greater feast, the feast of eternity in a more glorious home. In that house

of God eternal in the heavens, the table is spread and the Master Himself is at the head of it. The guests are gathering from every land, from every Christian Church and from every home where Christ is loved. There is a place at the table for all who seek it and live for it. Instead of settling down in this world, and living only for it, let us gird up the loins of our minds, and taking the staff of hope, march on in quiet faithful obedience to the will of God towards that home in which all the good meet, and in which Christ Himself will welcome them all to the eternal fulness of life, and reveal to them the glory of His own Person and Kingdom.



## JACOB AT PENIEL.

By Rev. H. Yooll.

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“And Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled with him a man until the breaking of the day.”—GEN. xxxii. 24.

THE interview between Jacob and the angel (as Hosea calls him) at the brook Jabbok, is either so deeply mysterious or so highly figurative, that we do not wonder at the diverse views that are held regarding the phenomenon; some viewing it as a sort of dream-like drama passing in the mind of Jacob, others believing it to be a supernatural occurrence, objectively and physically real. We shall not dwell on this except to say that in our judgment it does no violence to the principle of a sound and prudent criticism if we accept the latter view. Appearances of the “angel of the Covenant” were indeed of frequent recurrence in Old Testament times, and seem to foreshadow the fact of the Incarnation. Jacob’s own account of this remarkable interview, and the general aspect of verisimilitude in the entire story—the disabling touch, the authority in changing the name, and the like, seem to show the presence of the miraculous in a direct, tangible and factual form. Our purpose, however, is not controversy; but what I would point out is this—

that Jacob was being brought into mysterious contact with God Himself on this the most memorable crisis of his life. The results of the contest here described were fraught with the highest moral value to Jacob's character and subsequent history. He had felt himself ill at ease in Laban's service, and desired deliverance from one so self-seeking and exacting. Perhaps we should say there is not much to choose between the characters of the two men, Laban and Jacob, but not less urgent on that account is Jacob's desire to escape from Laban. That flight he shrewdly effects, and proceeds with his household and flocks in the direction of the land from which, twenty years before, he had been expatriated for his fraud on his brother Esau. God had made a covenant with Jacob that he should have the land of his fathers for an inheritance, and faith in this promise is all along a saving element in Jacob's mind amid much that otherwise derogates from his character. Halting on the further side of the stream Jabbok—a small river which emptied itself into the Jordan on the east—he learns of the approach of his passionate, yet injured brother Esau against him, and he feels that a critical moment indeed has come. He sends lordly presents forward to appease his brother, and with characteristic foresight, disposes of his household as to their method and line of march. He then goes to prayer. It is not however the prayer of a broken-spirited man; he has much yet to learn ere the self-confident Jacob shall become the supplicating and victorious Israel. During the night his family, servants and flocks, under his guidance, pass over the brook; and Jacob returning, is left alone. He is the subject of conflicting emotions—guilty fear, crafty device, pride of will,

belief in the Divine promise, covetous eagerness to possess, all surge within him. What shall be the issue? There is the land. It is his by covenant right. He will at once rise and enter on its possession. He will appease Esau readily enough. He is equal to a task of this sort. The evil of the past shall vanish from an accusing memory, or be forgotten in the triumph of his new-found inheritance. And thus the spirit of self-confidence and natural vanity gets uppermost within him, and he rises in the resolution of an unchastened will, to possess himself of the land. Suddenly his steps are intercepted, an arrest is put upon him, his intentions are strangely crossed, and we are told in the dramatic language of the text: "There wrestled with him a man till the breaking of the day." Why is this? The answer is not far to seek. As Kurtz has put it, "All along Jacob's life had been the struggle of a clever and strong, a pertinacious and enduring, a self-confident and self-sufficient person, who was sure of the result only when he helped himself—a contest with God, who wished to break his strength and wisdom, in order to bestow upon him real strength in divine weakness, and real wisdom in divine folly."

That, brethren, is our lesson in this narrative. We read how the struggling wrestler finds himself in the grip of one mightier than himself, how at the mysterious touch of the Strong Stranger, the sinew of Jacob's thigh shrivels into paralysis, and how, what is of deeper significance and of greater consequence, his pride and self-will give way, and the stout combatant becomes the contrite suppliant to learn that he must receive the inheritance, not as the merited recompense of his own right hand, the meed of his skill or craft or prowess, but as the

pure gift of grace, the largess of God. Here, then, we learn the blessedness of self-surrender, the strength which comes by weakness, the victory of self-defeat. Let us apply this lesson in two or three directions. For it is well to remember that this contest was one of "Higher" against "lower." The angel wrestled with the man: God with Jacob. It was Divine strength and goodness against perverse and vain human antagonism. It has not been unusual to treat this remarkable episode as if its chief or only lesson is to show the value of a wrestling, earnest, persistent spirit in prayer—Jacob wrestling with God in an agony of supplication. Without doubt we may learn this from the scene; but Jacob did not really pray till he had submitted himself to God. He did not gain the promise as a triumphant wrestler, but by way of a chastened will. It was when the Jacob-nature went down before God, that prayer found its true voice and got its true answer. In the exercise of prayer there is need for fervour and persistency. Prolonged communion with God, waiting for the divine enduement, are necessary; but the primary lesson of our story is to carry our thought rather in the direction of those struggles of *selfhood* which are too often the antecedent hindrances of prayer rather than its sign and quality. Self-will must be substituted by self-surrender ere Jacob can become Israel, a prince with God and a true inheritor of good.

1. Let us in applying our lesson consider how far the *element of surrender*, intellectual and moral, *enters into our knowledge of God*. Are not men Jacob-like when in the spirit of intellectual pride they wrestle with the problem of the Divine existence as though "by searching they could find out God?" "God is great, and we know

Him not." Significant and sad are the lessons which we learn as to the feebleness and futility of merely intellectual speculation concerning God and the universe. Pantheism, materialism, agnosticism—in other words, doubt, bewilderment, negation, despair,—are the poor fruit which reason yields when it discards the light of revelation or fails to preserve a lowly, reverent and religious attitude in presence of the divine word. There is a point beyond which intellect must confess itself utterly baffled and helpless, when its strongest sinew shrinks into utter impotency, and its highest wisdom is felt to be the acceptance in simplicity and reverence of that which God hath condescended to make known to us concerning Himself. The words of Jesus have a profound meaning. "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes." See the beauty of this arrangement. If the certainties of truth depended upon the proof of miracles, prophecy, or the discoveries of science, of the deductions of philosophy, then truth would be in the reach chiefly of those who can weigh evidence, or are learned experts, or intellectual athletes. Whereas God hath said, "The *meek* will He guide in judgment." The humblest and the weakest may know more of God, of moral evil and of good, by a prayer of self-surrender, or by a single act of charity, than all the sages can teach: aye, or all the theologians can dogmatise upon. The poet speaks of the world's "great altar-stairs that slope thro' darkness up to God." Revelation also has its altar-stairs, but they slope through light up to God and immortality, albeit that light is tempered to our mortal vision in the sweet radi-

ance of the man Christ Jesus and His gospel of peace to bewildered and sinning men. That distinguished disciple of Darwin, the late J. G. Romanes, after much cheerless groping in darkness and doubt along the dimly-lighted stairways of science and philosophy, happily turned his steps toward light "ineffable and divine," and with a child-like sob of simple, holy trust—the faith of his early youth—nestled his wearied spirit on the bosom of the Father. What he failed to reach by the strenuous strivings of mere intellectual research, he gained by a meek and reverent faith. He came to know his Saviour-God. The clever but baffled "Jacob" became the victorious "Israel."

2. This historical drama suggests the picture of an *awakened conscience* in *its struggles* after rest. To the awakened soul the question is a natural one, "How shall a man be just before God?" "Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" It is but another form of the Jacob-nature to betake ourselves to certain ways of self-amendment as if we might by our own righteousness win back the heritage we have lost. This was a common evil in Paul's day, and one which he himself had proved the utter folly of. It still exists, but with what results? The house may be swept and garnished, but the "last state is worse than the first." The distance from God has widened. Self-deceit, a polished egotism, soulless religiosity, is the poor sequel of it all. But ask him who has found true rest and let him answer. He will tell you there was a time when Paul's experience was his, "When the commandment came, sin revived and I died." Happy though painful was that

moment when the last sinew of self-righteous confidence withered at the touch of a Hand that was nailed to the Cross for him, and Charles Wesley's words aptly expressed his soul's experience,

“I need not tell Thee who I am,  
My misery and sin declare,  
Thyself hast called me by my name,  
Look on Thy hands and read it there”

Truly, salvation is of God. “By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” In the old classic story of Orestes pursued by the furies, because he slew his mother to avenge the death of his father whom she had murdered, we are told that he only found refuge from them when he fled to the temple of Apollo, the god of light. While he knelt at the altar, the Furies slept on the altar-steps. A true picture of that Divinely-provided shelter for an accusing conscience, which faith in Jesus, our true altar, will secure. “Who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died!” In that supreme moment when the soul realises its guiltiness in God's holy sight, how utterly futile and foolish are seen to be all attempts after a sort of self-made atonement to wipe out the past by new resolutions and habits of the future. Shallow views of sin, of God's character, and of the mysterious death of Christ on the Cross, invariably co-exist with self-righteous confidence and a non-evangelical sentiment. But a true and deep conviction of sin will demand something vastly otherwise. The understanding may not indeed be able to satisfy itself by an elaborate theory of the atonement, but the quick intuitions of the conscience will demand even for itself such a satisfaction to God, as the Son of God “made

flesh" and "made sin" alone could offer, and which by the mercy of God, we can by faith claim as done for us, who virtually have died in Him. Standing under the shadow of a cross whereon a great divine atonement, not a martyrdom, has passed, we instinctively feel a security and a peace possess the conscience, so complete and absolute, that all our fears and struggles end, and we no longer think of bartering for Heaven with God by aught we may try to do, but we fling ourselves in gratitude and ecstasy at the Redeemer's feet to sing,

" 'Tis Love ! 'tis Love ! Thou diedst for me !  
I hear Thy whisper in my heart."

And that whisper is God's warrant to the soul that a transaction of infinite value has taken place:—Sin measured at the Cross is forgiven for the sake of Him Who died thereon.

3. Again, the thought is suggested that God *wrestles with us against our sins, the selfish desires, the blind self-will of our nature*. How often does the spirit of distrust and selfishness rise up within us and wrestle against what appears to us an unknown and adverse power? The way is dark, and God may even have sent the shadows, for He would have us learn to trust Him and listen for His voice in the dark; but the first impulse of the natural man is to harden the spiritual muscles, to resist what we term the "cross-providence," and to take matters into our own hands. "Wherefore," we cry petulantly, "contentest Thou with me?" and we resolve to engineer our own path rather than yield to the higher law of the Spirit whispering to our inmost self. The result is far from satisfactory. We pierce ourselves through with many sorrows, till after a while we come to learn that it is not

by putting our will first and God's second, that solution of our difficulties is to come, but by humble, and it may be tearful acquiescence in the Divine purposes, which surely, though it may be slowly, evolve themselves. Our selfish struggling is then turned into submissive prayer, and our sighing is exchanged for songs. A lady and gentleman were riding in a carriage when the horse grew restive from some jolting caused by an unnoticed rut. The gentleman had the reins in hand steadily and all was in perfect command; but the lady being frightened, suddenly took one rein in her hand and pulled violently though repeatedly told by her companion to "Let go." The horse now also thoroughly frightened, started away, upsetting both in the ditch, and breaking the carriage in pieces. So is it with us and our Lord. The hour of trial comes, we, affrighted and not seeing our way, take the reins of government out of His hands, and so meet with great disaster. O child of God! let the "*government be upon His shoulder.*" His will and way are best.

How often does the sinew of impatience and fretfulness assert itself even in *Christian work*. We wish to obtain speedy and visible results, or we wish blessing and success to come in a certain form, and by some pre-concerted method of our own. It does not so turn out, and we are disappointed and restive. Thus we lose the calmness and strength which alone are found by waiting on God, and a patient discharge of duty. There is, of course, a dull soulless passivity which is to be avoided if we are to be true servants of God; but there is a patient trustfulness which, while it honours God, lends itself to strenuous toil. Let us cultivate this virtue. It may not

be best for us to see all we desire to see ; besides there is much in Christian work that is silent and unseen, ripening towards a golden harvest. Hence we may wisely adopt the proverb,

“ I know what may be known,  
I do what may be done,  
I leave the rest with God.”

Or again, does not God’s angel of blessing sometimes come between men and *coveted earthly possessions*? Men are slow to learn that they can inherit nothing, not even temporal good, by the Jacob-nature, but only as with guileless heart they seek to be the “stewards of God” in the use of temporal gifts.

“ We lose what on ourselves we spend ;  
We have a treasure without end  
Whatever, Lord, to Thee we lend.”

To gain some coveted worldly prize or distinction, men put forth their utmost strength and skill. They strain at the oar, and they display a zeal and an eagerness that are simply astounding. But God is not taken into account ; His will, His glory is relegated to the remotest background, it may be, of their thought ; and when the possession is gained it brings with it a curse and bitterness. They do not truly possess the so-called prize, but are possessed by it ; dupes of the seen and sordid ; slaves to a covetousness that hardens and withers ; or degraded votaries of some pampered lust. We can only truly inherit temporal good by using it to serve a higher good, and not a lower end. This is the meaning of our Lord’s words, “A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things he may possess.” He is a true inheritor of

life's uses and benefits when all forms of inferior good are held in and for God, and come under the law of a consecrated will. Spiritual prosperity should be the measure and controlling principle of every other. Now that this may be so, how often, in the lives of good men, God's interposing hand is felt. The coveted prize is withheld; the brook Jabbok is not permitted to be crossed until God sees that it is safe for the soul, and that with the possession has come the ability rightly to use it. On this principle may not the Divine restraining hand intervene in human affairs? Sickness, bereavement, possibly an unlooked-for commercial panic, or other perplexing circumstances, have come in to upset our favourite plans and projects. But these were divine hindrances, which, although we fought against them, were helps to higher good and have come to be acknowledged as blessings in disguise. The issue may have been restored temporal blessings, or health or privilege. Such we have notable examples of in the lives of Job and Nebuchadnezzar—doubling the brightness of their days—but in the higher result of which these things were the accompaniment we have had occasion to thank God for the Marah of bitterness which has been sweetened by His grace, and bless Him for the Gethsemane which has become a bright and joyous Ebenezer.

Thus are we apt to struggle in the darkness with what after all turns out to be the angel of blessing, as Jacob found out that this strange personage was not his enemy but his friend.

So also in the sphere of the *directly spiritual, the inheritance of saintliness and power*, does not this Old Testament picture offer a timely suggestion? The key

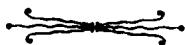
to spiritual peace and power and princely dominion is in submission to God, self-surrender to the eternal, thrice-holy Will of the Most High. "Deliberate self-adjustment to the highest, deliberate disentanglement from the lowest, with deliberate opening of your inmost nature to the noblest impulses, with deliberate prayerful harmony with the Divine purpose, 'will bring us to possess our possessions,' and inherit all the good of the land." Some people have little glow in their Christian life, little power for service, because they do not fully yield themselves to God. Some lurking principle of self hinders, and consecration does not run parallel with known conviction. There may be much talking of "the power," but little seeking it on God's lines. Many would like to "shine as lights in the world" who do not so eagerly seek to "burn." But till we are willing that the holy fire shall burn up all base desire, all merely self-gratifying elements in the life, all pride of heart and will, we can never truly "shine" for God. Strange fire is that which burns on the altar, which is not kindled by Heaven's live coal. Nor can God give us "the power" simply to make us notable and great in the eyes of men. Simon Magus desired the Holy Ghost for purposes of self-exaltation; but in God's order of grace we sink to rise. A self-conscious, self-seeking, Jacob-like spirit never is blessed. It is only when we are absorbed in a passion for God and man, when indeed we are willing to drink with Christ the cup of His sorrow and be baptised with His baptism that we rise up "Israels" before God and take our place among the princes of His kingdom. It is the self-life that makes men weak in character, and meagre in spiritual attainments and possessions. But

as in nature, so in grace, God works along the line of least resistance, and the more readily we obey, the sooner will be accomplished our redemption from that dulness and feebleness and pessimism which make life scarcely worth living, and of which our higher nature is ashamed. The entire man yielded up to God is given back to itself in moral health and wealth and ennobled capacity, as Jacob lost his old self and name "Supplanter," and received the better one "Israel." "He always wins who sides with God ; " and though in the process of submission we are chastened by a Divine hand which sends us halting to the end of our journey with a deeper sense of sin and a keen remembrance of the needed discipline, which every future step of the road only helps to keep alive, yet the day has dawned upon us, the darkness of Jabbok is displaced by the light of Peniel ; and upon a restrung harp we raise our jubilant notes—

"Lame as I am I take the prey,  
Hell, earth, and sin with ease o'ercome ;  
I leap for joy, pursue my way,  
And as a bounding hart fly home :  
Through all eternity to prove,  
Thy nature and Thy name is Love."

It is recorded that many years subsequent to his conversion, John Woolman, a celebrated Quaker, had an illness, during which he fell into a kind of trance. While in that state he says: "I heard a soft melodious voice, more pure and harmonious than any I had heard with my ears before. It seemed the voice of an angel who spoke to the other angels, and the words he spake were, 'John Woolman is dead.' Being assured that I was in the body still, I greatly wondered at this." It remained for

a time a mystery to him; but later he adds: "Divine power came upon me and I opened my mouth and said, 'I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' Then the mystery was opened and I perceived that the language, 'John Woolman is dead,' meant no more than the death of my own will." From that time he was endued with redoubled power to labour for the liberation of the negro slaves. Like power will come to us if we yield to the Angel. Mendelssohn once visited the cathedral at Friborg, and, having heard the great organ, went into the organ-loft and asked to be allowed to play it. The old organist, in jealousy for his instrument, at first refused, but was afterward prevailed on to allow the stranger to try the colossal "thunderer" of the cathedral. And after standing by in an ecstasy of delight and amazement for a few moments, he suddenly laid his hands on the shoulders of the inspired musician, and exclaimed: "Who are you? What is your name?" "Mendelssohn," replied the player. "And can it be I had so nearly refused to let Mendelssohn touch this organ!" Brethren, let us give the entire key-board of our nature to the all-controlling hand of the Divine Musician. He only can evoke the true and deep harmonies of the soul, and of our common lives, create the holy psalm. "And Jacob asked him and said, 'Tell me, I pray thee, thy name.' And He said, 'Wherefore is it thou dost ask after my name?' *And He blessed him there.*" The name is in the blessing. He saw God face to face.



## SIGNS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

By T. RUDDLE, Esq., B.A.

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“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory.”—JOHN ii. 11.

The R.V more correctly reads, “This beginning of His signs did Jesus at Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory.”

THE Jews were a miracle-loving people. Our Lord Himself complained of them, “Except ye see signs and wonders ye will in no wise believe;” and on another occasion He exclaimed in language of stern rebuke, “A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas.” St. Paul writing to the Corinthians repeats the same accusation. Contrasting the opposition to the gospel on the part of Jews and Greeks he says, “The Jews require a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom.” The miracles of the Gospel are, however, never mere prodigies (*miracula, terata, centaurs* as Mr. Huxley most unjustly regards them; nor are they portents or omens of coming good or evil. St. John always calls them *signs, (sēmeia)*, signs of the kingdom of God which Christ came to establish on earth. And, as applied to these, the definition we were taught as boys in the Sunday School, “A miracle is a violation or sus-

pension of the ordinary Laws of Nature," is faulty in two ways: It assumes a great deal more than we know to be true, and it fails to indicate the essential characteristic of these *signs* of the Redeemer's kingdom. Nor is Dr. Pope's definition much less faulty,— "A miracle is an intervention of the Supreme Power in the established course of nature." One axiom may, I think, be safely assumed: If the Supreme Power, that is God, intervenes at any time in the established course of Nature, it is not to violate nor suspend the laws which He Himself enacted. Obedience to law is the supreme lesson taught us by the heavens above, and the earth beneath, by human history and by divine revelation. "I will have obedience and not sacrifice," is Heaven's message to every age and every people. And the supreme blessedness of the Messiah's kingdom, whether on earth or in heaven, is not *liberty*, in its much abused sense of exemption from law, but is prompt and cheerful obedience to righteous law. Of all writers with whom I am familiar, Frederick Denison Maurice best explains the essential character of these *signs* wrought by the Son of Man. He has not himself framed a definition of the word, but the following accurately expresses, I believe, his teaching: *A miracle or sign in the Gospels is an intervention of divine power to bring under law that which was in antagonism to law.* Let us see how far this definition applies to a few typical miracles of our Lord; and, first, to the miracle recorded in the context.

The narrative begins in this way: "There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; and both Jesus was called, and His disciples to

the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine." The occasion was one of the most interesting in human affairs, a rural wedding among the godly poor. In our own age and country the labourer and artisan will pinch themselves for many a week to be hospitable at such a time; and the thrifty matron scorns to be penurious just then. And all this is tenfold truer of oriental lands and peoples. The hospitality of the East is as open-handed and profuse as in England it is chary and discreet. And to fail in hospitality at a wedding-feast would be regarded as an affront to the guests and an indelible disgrace to the bridegroom and the bride. And yet this lowly, godly pair, whose nuptials were honoured, as never marriage was honoured before and never has been since, were in danger of this bitter sorrow and public shame. And to shield them from the opprobrium and the pain, He who taught the vine to drink in the moisture of the soil, and to elaborate it into the luscious juice of the grape, exercised His beneficent transforming power at Cana of Galilee, in a way not less mysterious to our poor human reason, and *not more*. Now what is there abnormal, what contrary to the law of Nature and of God in such a narrative as this? Is it that on a single occasion the Redeemer of men interposed His almighty power to snatch two pious, trustful souls from the utmost bitterness of penury, the scorn of a cruel, selfish world? Nay, rather, is it not wonderful that His power is not exercised to the same end in a thousand different places every day? Is not *this* the marvel, the one miracle unexplained and for ever inexplicable, that the loyal, loving sons and daughters of

Him who feeds the ravens, emblems of voracity and of all uncleanness, and who clothes the lilies of the field in raiment richer than monarch ever wore, should suffer from day to day and from year to year the cruel tooth of pitiless poverty? Here is mystery indeed, the central mystery of the world and of revelation, glory through suffering, the crown by way of the cross. What then is the significance of this first sign of Messiah's kingdom? To the good man, struggling against adverse fate, it says, "At thy humble board, with its scant supply of frugal fare, the King Himself will deign to sit and break the bread, and fill the cup for thee. And when thy day's work is done, He will take thee to His banqueting-house, where they hunger no more, neither thirst any more, but the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne doth feed them."

Let us next examine the first miracle recorded by St. Matthew: "When He was come down from the mountain great multitudes followed Him. And behold there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them." Here we have at the first blush a tangle of perplexing contradictions,—on the one hand a lofty disregard of the law, and on the other a scrupulous loyalty to it. But let us look into the matter a little more closely. Our Lord had been addressing the multitudes. Instead of echoing the traditions of the elders, He had

given a new and startling exposition of the “Ten Words” which was all His own. “And the people were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.” We may imagine some of His more intelligent hearers, as they came down from the mountain, saying to themselves or to each other, “Is this young teacher, who has spoken such wonderful words to-day, a true prophet of the Highest, prepared, like Jeremy of old, to bear his testimony always and everywhere, and, if need be, to face infamy and imprisonment and death? Does he in his own life obey the divine law which he has proclaimed to us? or is it the old, old story, preaching one thing and practising a widely different?” Suddenly, as they are entering a little town at the foot of the mountain, there is a tumult, almost a panic, among the people. A man “full of leprosy,” forgetful alike of the Mosaic law, of the prejudices of his countrymen, and of ordinary decorum, pushes his way through the crowd, and falling first on his knees, then on his face, exclaims, “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.” To be smitten with leprosy was to be condemned to a slow, painful and hideous death; but it meant an agony deeper even than this. “Man’s inhumanity to man” had added a deadlier pang to an affliction sufficiently deadly already. The victim was not only excluded from human society as a necessary protection to others, but thrust out of human sympathy by merciless prejudice. Leprosy, they said, was the manifest “finger of God.” Friends shook their heads and muttered, “Either this man hath sinned or his parents, that this evil has come upon him.” It was the unkindest cut of all, as the tongues of Bildad

and Zophar were the cruellest scourge of Job. "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmities; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" Therefore Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, and said, "I will; be thou clean." "It was," the commentators tell us, "a violation of the *letter* of the Mosaic Law, but not of its *spirit*." Is that so certain? To some of us such an act appears as contrary to the spirit as to the letter of the Mosaic Law. There was much in the Mosaic Law that was harsh and imperfect. Because of the hardness of the people's hearts Moses permitted some things that were forbidden from the beginning. On this point Ezekiel is very bold: "I gave them statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live." There was a law before Moses, and which has continued since the Mosaic institutions ceased to be,—a law written by the finger of God, not on tables of stone, but on the hearts and consciences of men, the law of love, and mercy, and human brotherhood, the law which proclaims to all men, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." And when the Mosaic Law comes into conflict with this eternal law it must give place. Much as the leper longed for cleansing and health, he yearned for human love and sympathy still more: and these he found in the Son of Man. And however deep his gratitude for his cure, there was one circumstance that he thought of oftenest, and which oftenest brought him to his knees and to tears: "the Great Physician put forth His hand and touched me, all leper as I was, before He spoke the healing word." Pain and loathsome disease are rebels and usurpers in God's kingdom, the works of the arch-Adversary, which

Christ came to destroy. To drive these away and to restore health and happiness is to substitute order and law for anarchy and rebellion; and to do this the Redeemer on this occasion interposed His Almighty power. Was this contrary to the law of Nature or of God, or in entire harmony with both? It was a sign of the Redeemer's kingdom. And to him who is polluted with sin, and under sentence of death it says, "Delay not; hasten to Him; cast thyself at His feet, and say, 'Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.' And He will put forth His hand and touch thee, and say, 'I will; be thou clean.'"

The next narrative is from St. Mark's gospel: "And when the even was come, He saith unto them (His disciples), 'Let us pass over unto the other side' (*i.e.* of the Galilean Lake). And when they had sent away the multitude, they took Him even as He was in the ship. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And He was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow (cushion); and they awoke Him and say unto Him, Master, carest Thou not that we perish? And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, 'Peace, be still.' And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." The Lake of Galilee has always been subject to sudden and furious gales. George Adam Smith says,\* "The sea-winds, which freshen all Galilee and high Hauran beyond, blow over this basin, and the sun beats into it with unmitigated ardour. The atmosphere, for the most part, hangs still and heavy, but the cold currents as they pass from the west, are sucked down in vortices

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\* "Historical Geography of the Holy Land," pp. 441-2.

of air, or by the narrow gorges that break upon the lake. Then arise those sudden storms for which the region is notorious—

‘The wind, the tempest roaring high,  
The tumult of a tropic sky.’”

At the call of Jesus, Simon Peter and Andrew his brother had left their nets and their fishing-boats, and James and John their father, and the hired servants, to become “fishers of men”; and Matthew\* had started up from the receipt of custom, “leaving his cash-box unlocked and his books for whoso listed to balance” (Ruskin). But there was danger lest these apostles, relieved from the cares and responsibilities of business, and dreaming night and day of the splendour of that kingdom which their Master was about to set up, and in which they themselves were to play no inglorious part, might forget the millions who were toiling and bleeding in life’s stern conflict, with none to help and few to sympathise. Therefore He said unto them, “Let us pass over unto the other sid.”; and as they rowed He withdrew to the stern and slept on the cushion. Then came the storm, the frantic efforts of the sailor-fishermen, the appalling danger, and the cry for help, “Master! Master! We perish.” That little trip across the lake had driven the nonsense out of them, and brought them once more in touch with the toiling, suffering sons of men. Then Jesus “arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, ‘Peace, be still.’ And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.” It does not re-

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\* In St. Matthew’s Gospel the call of that apostle is placed after the stilling the tempest, but it appears from Mark and Luke (who follow chronological order more closely) to have been some time before it.

quire the scholarship nor the accurate local knowledge of Professor G. A. Smith to find a physical explanation of the storm, Carlyle's "apothecary's apprentice" could do that. It is the explanation of the calm that transcends our poor philosophy. Yet when the son of Amoz beheld the King afar off, he exclaimed, "His name shall be called The Prince of Peace"; and when angels announced His birth they sang

"Glory to God in the Highest ;  
On Earth, Peace to men of good-will."

The Kingdom of God is not tempest and terror, but righteousness, and peace, and joy. Do we marvel, then, that The Prince of Peace, when He saw His devoted, though wayward, apostles tempest-driven, and at their wits' end, hushed the brawling winds, and bade the waves "Be still"? It was a sign of His kingdom, and a manifestation of His glory. And to us in the storms and conflicts of life it whispers, "Cry unto the Lord in thy trouble, and He shall bring thee out of thy distresses. He shall make the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof shall be still. Then shalt thou be glad because thou art quiet; for so He shall bring thee unto thy desired haven."

The last miracle I have selected is recorded by St. Luke: "And it came to pass that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and much people. Now when He came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And He came and touched the open

coffin ; and they that bore him stood still. And He said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother."

It was a fancy, amounting almost to superstition, of the late Matthew Arnold to avoid the name of God, and to talk of a "stream of tendency making for righteousness." To the ordinary mind nothing whatever is gained, and very much is lost, by the use of this periphrasis. Admitting, however, that Mr. Arnold's phrase expresses with tolerable accuracy the manifestation of the divine in human affairs, it is certain that, alongside this tendency making for righteousness, there is a stream of tendency making for moral and spiritual death. And physical death, the death of the body, is the obvious manifestation of this tendency—the ripened fruit of disobedience. "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Mr. Charles Wesley never made a more lamentable mistake than when he penned the hymn,

" Ah, lovely appearance of death !  
What sight upon earth is so fair ? "

The sentiment is utterly morbid and false, physically, aesthetically and spiritually untrue. As life bears the image of the divine, so death bears the image of the Adversary "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." And that man, and only that man, who has stood by the bed of a loved one, one for whom he would have gladly given his own life, and has heard the awful whisper, "Only a few minutes more," can estimate the enemy's power. That man has passed through the Valley of the Shadow of Death ; and only he can conceive the desolation of soul when the enemy strikes a cherished

youth, "the only son of his mother, and she a widow." It was a poor blundering kindness—alack, how often kindness blunders!—in those good people of Nain to obtrude their unavailing sympathy on the stricken mother, whose inmost soul was crying out, "In pity leave me with my dead and with God." What then is the explanation of the words that follow: "And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not?" At first sight the command seems singularly heartless and ill-timed; and had the Speaker been other than He was, it would have been. If the woman was weeping—if she was able to weep at such an hour—the tears were gracious drops, and saved the heart from bursting outright. And it is a very poor explanation of the difficulty to say that our Lord spoke these words in anticipation of what He was about to do. We have seen that when He cleansed the leper His delicate tact was as obvious as His pity and His power. Was this beautiful trait quite absent in the present case, where it was so especially needed? We remember that on another occasion our Lord said to a man with a withered hand, "Stretch forth thy hand." And "he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other." When He commanded the man to do an apparently impossible thing, He gave him the strength to do it. And on this occasion, when He said unto the woman "Weep not," we may be sure He gave her the strength to obey. She recognised in the Speaker the Saviour and Deliverer of men. A strange peace, such as she had never known, filled her soul. She felt she could trust herself and her loved one to His safe keeping, whether on earth or in heaven. Jesus had an-

nounced His own mission to His fellow-townsmen at Nazareth in the words of the great Hebrew prophet: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings to the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." He therefore wiped away the widow's tears before He summoned the captive from Death's strong prison-house. Then He once more set aside the Mosaic ordinance, for Death cannot defile the Author of Life, and touching the open coffin, said, "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise." Jesus speaks as to a listening ear. When our loved ones are taken away we gaze vacantly upward, if perchance we may trace the spirit's flight. Perchance they are nearer than we imagine, ministering spirits, sent to minister to the widow in her solitude and the strong man in his agony. However that may be, the Arch-rebel was subdued and brought under the law of life and love; for "he that was dead sat up, and began to speak, and He (Jesus) delivered him to his mother." In this narrative do we not hear in anticipation the wonderful words afterwards spoken to Martha of Bethany, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die."

These signs did Jesus and manifested His glory. And have not similar signs been repeated in every age and every land? Is it not true to-day, as of old, that the lepers are cleansed, the dead raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them?

“ Sinners of old Thou didst receive,  
With comfortable words and kind,  
Their sorrows cheer, their wants relieve,  
Heal the diseased and cure the blind.  
And art Thou not the Saviour still,  
In every place and age the same ?  
Hast Thou forgot Thy gracious skill,  
Or lost the virtue of Thy name ? ”



## THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST.

By Rev. A. L. HUMPHRIES, M.A.

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“ Wherefore consider the High Priest of our confession, even Jesus.”—HEBREWS iii. 1.

EACH New Testament writer approaches Christ from his own standpoint, and presents Him in forms that accord with his own mental sympathies. In the first three Gospels Christ is the King, setting up His throne, and establishing the Kingdom of God amongst men. The key-word of the fourth Gospel is life. “ Life eternal ” is the boon which Christ is there represented as conferring upon men. Similarly the deep, underlying note of the Pauline theology is righteousness. Christ is to Paul the revelation of the Divine righteousness,—that is His mission man-wards. And God-wards His work is the creation of human righteousness, the bestowal upon a sinful race of an imputed righteousness, but a righteousness that is only imputed because it comes within the range of both God’s power and purpose to make it the actual possession of all who trust in Him. And then there is this Epistle to the Hebrews having as its central theme the High Priesthood of Jesus. Now in each case the individual view, though prominent, is not exclusive. Christ is too great to be pressed into a single term. We

never feel the poverty of language so much as when we employ it to describe Him. He is greater than any term, greater than all terms. It is at the best only an imperfect idea of His dignity and work that words are able to convey to us. And, therefore, the different conceptions of Him which pervade the New Testament are neither exhaustive nor contradictory. They all overlap each other, like so many intersecting circles, and we must study not one but all, if we would really know what Christ was and is.

No doubt each writer's view is somewhat determined by his own intellectual sympathies. In the case of this Epistle the author's standpoint was also affected by the peculiar needs of his first readers. Though converts from Judaism, they were in danger of reverting to it. Their stumbling-block was partly the novelty of Christianity. It seemed difficult to them to believe that a religion only born yesterday could ever be intended to supersede a system that had behind it the sanctions of centuries. But their greatest difficulty was that the new faith seemed so revolutionary. They missed in the new economy all the familiar elements of the old—its order of priesthood, the routine of its sacrifices, the symbolism of its ritual. To them the new order seemed a violent break from the old one—its direct antithesis. "But it is not so," says, in effect, the author of this Epistle. "You have altogether misconceived the genius of the Gospel. In its relations to Judaism it is not so much a revolution as an evolution. All the vital elements of the old system are reproduced in the new, the only difference being that in Christianity they are exhibited in their ideal and final form. Christ is not the contradic-

tion but the completion of Judaism. He supersedes the old economy only by establishing a better one, a system that discharges for all time, and in infinite perfection, the functions of the one that it replaces." That is, in brief, the argument of this Epistle. It carried weight to its Jewish readers. It bears also a message to us, and for this reason—that priesthood and sacrifice respond to a need that is not merely Jewish but universal. For there are three facts that have written themselves everywhere upon the consciousness of man. Firstly, man instinctively feels that he was made for Divine fellowship. There is in us an aching void that only God can fill, an infinite hunger that only God can meet. That beautiful phrase of St. Augustine, "Lord, Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee," only expresses a yearning that lies at the root of every heart and makes each man divine. Secondly, we feel that sin has created a gulf between man and God, and has made fellowship impossible. We look with wistful eyes across "the echoing straits" that divide us from God, and we sigh over our vanished privileges. But we have done more than sigh. For, thirdly, man has ever been seeking to cross the gulf and to recover the lost fellowship; he has refused to acquiesce in the divorce between his soul and God. It is those three elemental facts that have created all priesthoods and instituted all sacrifices. Men shrank from an individual approach to God. Fear and unworthiness stood like two lions in their path, and gave pause to their trembling steps. Nevertheless, the universal yearning could not be hushed into perfect dumbness. Not daring to come in person, men sought to approach God by deputy. Through cer-

tain individuals they endeavoured to find some way of access to God, a channel of grace through which their sin-stained offerings might be laid at the Divine feet. The priest came into existence because humanity required him. He is not the growth of Jewish superstition, but the creation of human necessity. And humanity needs him still. Let us be *thankful* that Christianity supplies Him, and reverently consider Jesus as the High Priest of our confession.

Of all the offices that Christ fills, His priesthood is the central and most vital. It is the crown and summit of His ministry. As Prophet He widens the realm of truth, giving to us a new vision of God and a higher conception of duty. As King He sits upon the throne, swaying the sceptre of authority, and demanding from men an obedience that covers the whole sweep of human activity. But it is the Priest that gives force and vitality to both the Prophet and the King. The Priest supplies disciples to the Teacher, and subjects to the King. Human nature in its fallen condition had proved itself unable to keep the old commandments. How could it have observed the new? The heart was already alienated from God. How could it have welcomed the new King? It is the priestly Christ that has corrected the heart's fatal weakness and terminated man's long estrangement. Through Him we become skilful to learn and willing to obey. As Prophet and Priest and King we celebrate our risen Lord, but we sing our sweetest song in praise of Him "Who loved us and loosed us from our sins by His blood." That priestly ministry gives value and potency to every other.

1. Consider the *basis of Christ's priesthood*. Here

we step at once into the region of the ideal. We behold a Priest possessed of perfect qualifications for His office. For we must consider the worker in the light of his work. The function of the priest, as we have seen, was to bring God and man together, to restore the broken fellowship, to create a communion that should be unclouded by the presence of sin. The Mosaic priesthood never accomplished that. The thick veil which hung before the Holy of Holies proclaimed, in a more expressive eloquence than words, the separation of Israel from God. Only once in the year—on the great Day of Atonement—did the high priest lift the corner of that curtain and, on bended knee, bearing in his hands the blood of atonement, did he, as Israel's representative, approach the symbol of the ineffable presence of God. That solitary, annual entiance was far more expressive than no entrance at all would have been. Had that veil never been lifted, Israel might have felt that access to God was denied to her. Shut out from God's presence, she must never expect to enter therein, she must content herself with an eternal exclusion. But that annual entrance, too little to satisfy hope, yet too much to silence it, declared that fellowship with God was to man a legitimate aspiration, but declared too that under existing conditions the longing could only find imperfect gratification. "The way into the Holiest of all was not yet open." Like that mock sun that Nansen says used to appear above the horizon towards the end of the long polar night, the prophecy of the real sun that was a few days later to rise upon his darkness, the Old Testament priest was but the promise of a better one, who should do for men in fact what he only achieved in symbol. That better priest is Christ.

He brings to His work the highest credentials. He has inherent spiritual qualifications for His post. He is constituted Priest, not by an accident of birth, as was the case in the old economy, but by an eternal fitness of nature. He comes to bring God and man together. He can do so, for one reason, because He sustains ideal relations to both. On the one hand He is acceptable to God, and, on the other hand, sympathetic with men. If Christ were some rash usurper, clutching at a post to which He had not been called, undertaking duties for which He had no Divine sanction, then, even though the work be faithfully done, God would be under no obligation to accept it as a valid transaction. But if Christ be no usurper, if He be Priest by Divine decree, we feel that God will be bound to accept His ministry as a satisfaction of all His claims. God cannot ignore His own nominee, He cannot set aside the work of His own agent. The great High Priest fulfils that condition. He glorified not Himself to be made an High Priest. He is not Priest on His own initiative. The post was so arduous that, but for the inner compulsion of His love, even He might have shrunk from accepting it. But the prompting of His love within found echo in the voice of the Father without. He who "came" was also He who was "sent." The volunteer was also a delegate. With His commission endorsed by the Almighty Himself, Christ stands forth the accredited agent of heaven in the redemption of man.

Thus possessing authority to represent God to man, Christ also has sympathy to interpret man to God. In all essential points a priest must be one with those for whom he acts. Under the old economy the high priest

was of necessity taken from among men. How else could he in any adequate sense have taken the people's place on the great Day of Atonement, and in his single person have expressed the interests of the whole nation? And how could we trust our Divine representative unless He knows us? How can we be sure of His knowledge unless it be based upon a unity of experience and nature? The ideal High Priest must rise up not from without the race, but from within it. He must be no Divinity in the clouds, but a Brother at my side. Mere Deity cannot represent me. Deity does not pray, is not tempted, does not die. He who is to be my Saviour, must also be my Brother. He must stand on my platform, one with me in interest and nature, compassed about by every sinless infirmity that has put its mark upon me, subject to every limitation that is mine by nature and to every disablement that is mine by experience save that of actual transgression. How else can I be sure that He understands me? How else, when He speaks in my name, can I feel that He will say what I would? If Christ be no man, He can be no Priest for men. But He *is* man. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." "He laid not hold of angels, but He laid hold of the seed of Abraham." "He is not ashamed to call us brethren." Deity has entered into the race and become part of it that He may save it. Christ has become so really one with us that we can trust Him as our mouthpiece; what He does can be accepted as done by the race, and in Him, and by virtue of His offering, not only He but the whole of His brethren can be regarded as righteous before God. "Such a High Priest became us." Such a Priest was demanded by the logic of the situation. Such a High Priest we have. He

feels our infirmities, for He shared them. He knows our temptations, for He has endured them. He understands our sorrow and heartache and pain—He has felt them all. Even death is no stranger to Him, for He has tasted it. From His baptism of suffering He comes forth speaking our language and interpreting our wants, qualified to be for us a merciful and trustworthy High Priest in things relating to God.

2. Consider, next, the *ministry of our High Priest*. The writer of this Epistle takes the Day of Atonement, the most solemn ceremony of the Jewish year, as the point where the new Priest meets and supersedes the old. Under the Mosaic economy the functions of the high priest were threefold. There fell to him the *duty of sacrifice*. The blood of the victim flowed at the altar. With that blood the high priest ventured into the august presence of God, thus completing within the sanctuary the offering that had been initiated at the altar. The victim represented the nation. And when the high priest brought its blood into the closest contact with God, he symbolically brought the nation into that intimate fellowship. The sins of the nation were covered. The sinful race was re-admitted to Divine communion; the breach between God and His people was healed. In the old system priest and sacrifice stand indissolubly connected. So “this Man must have somewhat to offer.” He is no priest if He presents no offering. And the quality of His offering will determine the efficacy of His priesthood. The blood of bulls and goats never took away sin. So far as their essential virtue was concerned, they left the transgressor just where they found him. It was only as they typified the ideal sacrifice that God consented to

accept them as a valid atonement for sin. That ideal sacrifice is Christ. He is the Priest who offers; He is the Victim that dies. It was not with the blood of bulls and goats, but with His own blood that He passed into the presence of God, having obtained eternal redemption. Animals that were only physically faultless could never avail like a Being Who was morally perfect. They could at best be only shadowy emblems of the real sacrifice. They stood on a lower plane than man, they belonged to a different order. The sacrifice that makes real atonement for sin must come, not from without the race, but from within it. A man must die for men. "This man," says this Epistle, "must have somewhat to offer." What is it? Behold! the Priest climbs the altar and lays there as the victim—Himself. Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. It was His own blood that ebbed away under the sacrificial knife; it was His own life that He offered up in an obedience that shrank not even from the shame and horror of the Cross. That sacrifice had value for others because of its blamelessness. Christ had no sins of His own to atone for. Had it been otherwise, His own life would have been forfeit and, so far from making atonement for others, He would have needed someone to make atonement for Him. But He who shared our temptations escaped our sins. He was sinless among the sinful, yet otherwise knit with such close ties of fellowship to His guilty brethren that His offering is truly representative and vicarious. When that One died for all, Paul says that all died. His death was as good as theirs, was accepted as theirs. The race died on Christ's Cross. The teeming millions of humanity from Adam to the end of time were all focussed in

that one radiant personality, so that what was done by our Representative was accepted as done by us. From amongst the offenders a perfect and representative satisfaction was made to the claims of God. Christ put away sin and, in so doing, put away all that hindered the free access of man to God.

Another of the high priestly functions was *intercession*. Behind the veil the priest had more work to do than merely offer the blood. For the term "intercession" covers more than mere supplication. We often narrow it down to that meaning, and that signification, it is true, is more prominent than any other. But the high priest of old did more in the Holy Place than simply present the prayers of the people. As the word which we translate by "intercession" implies, he transacted with God on their behalf. He confessed their sins, made known their wants, offered their praise. He hearkened to God as well as spoke to Him. He was not simply the nation's suppliant, but its ambassador, representing it in all its interests and claims before the throne of God. The ministry which Aaron discharged in the lower sanctuary, Christ fulfils in the upper. No doctrine has been so perplexing to many devout minds as this doctrine of intercession. It must be confessed that our plummet cannot penetrate far into its depths, or, to change the figure, the light upon it is interspersed with deep shadows of mystery. Men ask how Christ can be at once a Being who prays and the Being that is prayed to. What need is there for an Intercessor at all? What reluctance is there in God to be overcome? What ignorance to be dispelled? Is the work of salvation less dear to the Father than it is to the Son? We must beware,

however, lest our answers carry us further than we dream. We cannot on these grounds dispute the need of the Divine intercession without at the same time striking at all prayer, human or divine. Why should anyone pray? We can never pray with the idea that we are enlightening an ignorant, or coercing a reluctant Deity. Yet we do pray; we know that we ought to pray. Moreover, Christ prayed when He was on earth. "With strong crying and tears" He made supplication unto Him that was able to save Him. He did more than pray for Himself—He prayed for others. We think of that great High Priestly prayer in the upper room, in which He bore up with infinite tenderness the needs of His Church. We remember His prayer for Peter that his faith might not fail. We recall His promise in the upper room: "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter." He who could pray on earth, can pray in heaven. He who could intercede below, can intercede above. Though He hears as God, He can pray as man, and can continually bear up before His Father the needs of His brethren.

For it is not only for man, but as man that He fulfils this mediatorial office. Our Mediator before God is Jesus Christ, man. And His work, as we have suggested, is much broader than that of mere supplication. Christ stands in heaven as the guardian of our interests. By His infinite sacrifice He has established a new covenant between God and man, between a holy God on the one hand and a holy people on the other. But there is this great difference between Christ and us, between our Representative and the community for which He stands. He is actually holy, and therefore He is absolutely and

freely entitled to all the blessings and privileges of the new covenant relation. But His people in themselves are not so entitled. We are not actually holy, our goodness does not touch the level of our Master's. We are growing up to His stature, we are in process of complete sanctification. Our holiness at present is not actual but is in measure imputed, and if God simply looked at us in our present imperfection, He might deny us access to the covenant and to its inestimable privileges. Yes, if He simply looked at *us*! But

“There for me the Saviour stands,  
Shows His wounds, and spreads His hands.”

“Look at Me,” He cries, “and then look at My brethren through Me. Faulty they are, but faulty they shall not always remain. Behold in My face the image that they shall one day wear! Behold in My blood the pledge of My power to clothe even these imperfect saints with a complete salvation!” So the Son becomes surety for our ultimate and perfect redemption. The Father knows the faithfulness of the Son, and, because of the blood, He —to use Augustine's fine saying—“looks at us not as we are, but as we are becoming.” Through the intercession of His Son He admits us from the first to all the privileges of the covenant relationship. So we who have the Spirit with us on earth, have the Son for us in heaven, an advocate with God, an advocate in God. There is no fear that our needs will be unvoiced yonder. Our Elder Brother is there, acting for us in all that pertains to our spiritual well-being. Time has not weakened the bond between Him and His suffering brethren, distance has not effaced His sympathy. Through Him we may

have confidence to come, boldness to ask, and infinite right to receive the Divine mercy and grace.

The third high priestly function in the old economy, was that of *blessing*. He who in the sanctuary served as the mouth-piece of man to God, came forth to be the mouth-piece of God to man. He brought back from the secret of the Divine presence Jehovah's answer to Israel's offerings and prayers. That answer naturally took the form of blessing, for the sacrifice had symbolically restored the covenant relation, and Israel stood before God a reconciled people. So also our great High Priest becomes the channel through which we are made partakers of the blessings of the better covenant. Ascended up on high He gives gifts unto men. It is true that He, unlike His type, never leaves the sanctuary in which He ministers. It is true, too, that He blesses not in word only, but in deed and in truth. Into Him, as into some great reservoir, the Divine bounty first collects, and of His fulness do we all receive, and grace upon grace. It is the pierced hand that puts every blessing into ours. When the departing Christ led His followers out as far as Bethany, He lifted His hands over them and blessed them. In that attitude He was taken from them. And it seems as though His last act on earth only anticipated what has been His eternal occupation in heaven. Have we redemption? It is "in Him" we have it. Have we grace? It is He that bestows it. Have we the Comforter? He has sent Him. From Him, through Him, in Him, we are enriched with all spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

It will not be out of place for us to consider two practical inferences that flow out of the great subject we have

been considering. Reflect, firstly, on the effect of Christ's priesthood on the *past*. This High Priest, by virtue of His entrance on office, has put all ceremonial systems out of date. He has stripped human priests of their prerogatives and material sacrifices of their deepest significance. Whatever about them was vital and efficacious, He has embodied in Himself. The theatre of interest has shifted from the earthly sanctuary to the heavenly. The old system is out of date because all its essential functions are being fulfilled in Christ. We do not need the shadow when we possess the reality. Christ's offering is the end of all sacrifice for sin. He is the true and final propitiation. Nowhere does the New Testament leave a loop-hole for the renewal of that offering. The only sacrifices that God's people can now present are thank-offerings. We can present the sacrifice of praise and beneficence; we can present the living thank-offering of ourselves in grateful acknowledgment of the mercies of God. No other sacrifices are left to the Church on earth. For any man, be he minister or layman, to talk of the Lord's Supper as becoming in his hands a renewal of the sacrifice of Christ, is to use language that Scripturally is absolutely unwarranted, it is to pretend to do what is at once unnecessary and impossible.

Christ's Priesthood, again, marks the abolition of all earthly priesthoods, except in so far as all Christians are priests because they offer the thank-offerings that have just been described. Christ is the only High Priest. Christians are priests of an inferior order. They belong to a priesthood that is not the perquisite of a class, but is the privilege of every believer. For any man to call himself a sacrificing priest because he conceives that in

his hands a certain rite attains a magic relation to sin, is to be guilty of a grave perversion of the truth. I care not what warrant such ideas find in the ecclesiasticism of the third century. It is enough for me that they are absent from the New Testament and are contradicted by it. We need no man's intercession ; we have Christ's. We wait for absolution at the lips of no earthly minister, we dispute his authority to pronounce it ; we seek it directly from Jesus Christ. He needs no earthly vicar either at Canterbury or Rome. We can have direct speech with Him. He can communicate directly to us. That one Priest in heaven means no priest on earth. There is a great deal of Judaism in modern Christianity. Some Churches have gone back to the beggarly elements of an antiquated system. Men have forgotten that when the perfect is come, that which is in part is done away. The tree discards the blossom when the fruit has set. Christians and Churches need to get out of the stifling air of superannuated forms and worn-out ideas, and to realise how gracious and complete is the liberty with which Christ has set them free.

We ought, lastly, to think of what Christ's High Priesthood means for the *future*. Well might the writer of this Epistle conceive of Christianity as being pre-eminently the religion of hope ! How could it be otherwise with such a High Priest ? What is there that He cannot do for us ? What is there that He will not do ? Our Priest never vacates His office, His sacrifice has infinite merit, His intercession ever prevails. What confidence should characterise our present approach to God ! What hope of future perfection should rise on the night of our **weakness and sin** ! "We see not yet all things

put under us." No, but we see Jesus. In Him we have the promise of what we shall be. If we make our conception of salvation as great as we please, if we put the highest estimate on the sins to be forgiven, the weakness to be corrected, the baseness to be removed, yet when we have made the most of our need, His grace remains greater. To the limit of that conception and beyond it He can save us. Yea, He is able to save unto the uttermost all them that seek access to God through Him, "seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for us."



## RELIGION AND LIBERTY.

BY REV. A. T. GUTTERY.

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“I have broken the bands of your yoke, and made you go upright.”—LEVITICUS xxvi. 13.

THE Book of Leviticus is not merely ecclesiastical, not only national; it states and enforces great moral and religious verities that are universal in their scope—truths that will never be outgrown as long as humanity is human and as long as moral sequence is uniform. This book is to be read, not only by priests and pietists, it is valuable literature for statesmen and jurists.

In the following verses, woe and want and ruin are pronounced on the peoples that are disloyal to God, and shrink from His law, but in this section is depicted the blessedness of those who refuse to swerve from their allegiance to divine ideals; they who are loyal to the Lord our God shall be enriched, their hearts filled with laughter, and their coasts with peace. Look for a moment at the blessings assured—and assured on the verity of God Himself.

They shall have plenty, the elements shall be propitious—the sun shall kiss and the rains fertilise their fields—before they have reaped the corn, the vintage shall be ready, and before they have pressed out the wine it

shall be time again to sow; and they shall have security from the hostility of nature—no plague shall invade them; from the hostility of men—no warrior shall invade them; no robber shall trouble them. They shall delight in victory, courage shall fire their hearts. Their numbers will increase, the glory of the Divine presence will lead their feet and crown their tabernacle, and as a consummation, they shall possess the virility and character of freedom. “I have broken the bands of your yoke and made you go upright.”

All these blessings, victory, peace, plenty, the Divine presence, are promised to obedience, and they are still true for the nations of our age. Communities that are highest in Christian character will be highest in every other blessing. Cast your eyes over the map of Europe, and if you had a thermometer and could gauge the amount of piety in each nation, you would find that the nation in which Christianity is purest, rises highest, spreads the farthest, descends the deepest, is the nation that is highest in all that dignifies, ennobles and blesses.

And so here, the maintenance of our native land in peace and prosperity, against all foes and all invasion, will rest not only upon the banners of our troops, not only upon the courage of our sailors, but far more upon the living religion that permeates great masses of our countrymen.

It is righteousness that exalteth a nation. Sin is the ruin of communities. No nation falls before a foreign foe till it has first committed moral suicide. Nations are self-slain. Rome fell only because of her inner corruption; the beautiful sisterhood of Greek States fell by their universal depravity; and our nation will never fall

before foreign foes as long as she fears God and works righteousness, and counts the sunshine of His favour more than silver or gold.

Ah, sirs, this pulpit—any pulpit, that strives to awaken in the public heart loyalty to God, and a craving for spiritual ideals, that protests against the pressure of materialism and grinding greed for gold, any pulpit that speaks for humanity and justice and freedom, is not only doing Christian work, but patriotic work as well.

Let us look more closely at God working for Freedom !

### I. LIBERTY.

I know no word that has suffered so much at the hands of its friends as this beautiful and valiant word, Freedom ! To many it is invested with terror and menace, for they see in it the beginning of anarchy, the wildness of licence, they see liberty without her crown, and bid us judge her when she is shamed and naked in the hands of her foes. Not so ! we see liberty in her true grace and charm, when with native innocence she blushes at rapine, and is affronted at sin, when labour is her delight, and the will of God is the abiding secret of her peace.

This is our heritage, as a gift of God, this is the genius of our Christ. We do not forget that Christ did not only call Lazarus into life, but He commanded the grave-clothes to be taken off him, that he might have liberty in life. Life without liberty from the grave-clothes would scarce have been a blessing—the bonds of tyranny are grave-clothes for both men and nations, no less, ultimately, for those who bind than for those who are bound. I wish our countrymen who are inflicting enforced labour

in some parts of Africa, and buying farm-servants at so much a lot, as you buy stock, would remember this truth, and learn that from these grave-clothes God will free all those who possess the secret of life in Him.

God and slavery are foes: bondage of man to man, of men to things, of worshippers to priests, is no inherent part of the divine economy, it is a foul importation born of mortal frailty and human sin. There was a time when slavery was spoken of as a divine institution, just as men now speak of the Drink Traffic as “the Trade.” “The Trade!!” forsooth, when it is no real trade at all but a piracy upon trade. All this talk about slavery as a divine institution has been exploded by the Epistle to Philemon, the life of Wilberforce and the American War. In the same way will the canting cry about the Drink Traffic meet the same fate.

God is the eternal chain-breaker. He is set against the oppressor—He will not have the face of the hireling pressed into the dust, nor will He have the employer oppressed by those to whom he pays wages, poor, ill-used masters! we must give them a word of sympathy now and again, for they seem to have fallen upon evil days. He would not have slaves behind the counter—to whom ten hours a day would seem heaven, let alone eight. He would not have slaves in the laundry and the kitchen, and not even in the drawing-room where cultured mistresses with deepest pathos mourn the degeneracy of our times. Nor would the Eternal have slaves at the altar, scourged by cruel superstitions, and haunted with ghostly visions; when we pray we are to pray as children, not chattels; we are to claim our birthright, and not cower before the lash; the terrors with which

sacerdotalism drives its victims wild, a gloom that often urges on madness, are not of God, they are born of the bottomless pit. Be not afraid, love is above the altar. The cross is mightier than the thunder-bolt. God is not only power, He is heart-power.

You can judge fairly the value of any ritual or creed by its enlarging, uplifting tendency ; does it expand the lungs, enlarge the heart, and uplift the head? does it make men move swiftly in larger places, and fire them with more radiant hopes? then it is of God, is fragrant with His very breath, and potent with His Spirit; but if it confines, depresses, and restricts its devotees, if it sinks them from confidence to fear, from virility to dread, and from freedom to bonds, then it is not of God—it is of—well, it is of priests.

At the altar, even of the Old Testament, the Lord God Omnipotent would make His statutes our song, and His service our delight. He asks for the loyalty, not of the jail, not even of the army, but of the family and home. Oh, rejoice in your Lord as chain-breaker!

Religion, then, has a negative mission; it not only creates, but it destroys, not only builds up, but pulls down, not only rivets, but it breaks; it destroys bondage, it smites down tyranny, it smashes the yoke, and it breaks the band that binds.

The Gospel says, Yes!—an eternal yes to every pure hope, and high resolve; its affirmation is the chant of your progress and the condition of your growth; but it says No' an eternal No! to every scheme and foul proposal that would fetter and depress human life—its negation is the doom of superstition and the death of tyranny.

Thank God, I am not uttering a wild cry for visiona-

ries, I am declaring the sane, sober, mighty truth of God—a truth which all the course of history attests. Read the story of the years, try and grasp the tendency of the ages, and what is their most salient feature? it is the snapping of yokes and the breaking of bands ; you see life claiming more air and space both in education, in industry, in politics, and in religion ; generation after generation has claimed a larger, freer life. Why this unending story—a story that gives to us all the valour and romance and daring of the past? Whence comes all this glorious sequence? It comes from the heart and thought of God. The divine Father is in it all the way, until now no hope is too royal and ample for us to hold, we dare to believe for the greatest things. Say these are dreams, but these dreams have life and freedom in them. I affirm here to-day that God Himself has given to men these great truths of liberty and equality, which are like mothers' breasts, carrying food for all ages. Let us not fear that they shall ever be overthrown or destroyed. We may have to go through dark times, rocking times, when for the time we are sick with hope deferred—we may have to keep calm amid days of din, tumult and confusion ; but the time shall come—it shall come, for God decrees it—when there shall be no more oppression, greed, and cruelty, but when all over the world, there shall be a common people, having a common Bible, a common God, a common peace and joy in a common brotherhood.

As we pass from Leviticus to the New Testament, we can rejoice in the same great truth ; the genius of the Gospels and of the Epistles is emancipation from legality to love, from precepts to principles. I never read this

book but I seem to climb the hills and breathe a free, pure air, fragrant with the flowers of hope, and musical with the choristers of peace. The man, for instance, who can read the Sermon on the Mount, the letter to the Ephesians, the Epistles of John, and then go down among the crowd, to grind and outwit and oppress his fellows, lacks either intelligence or conscience; very often he lacks both.

Not only the written Scriptures, but the Bible enacted and lived before our eyes shows this. No man can watch the movements of Providence in human affairs—and I believe in an over-ruling Providence with all my heart—without seeing that the supreme, august Power that governs us, often unconsciously, is making “the bounds of freedom wider still,” and doing this with increased rapidity and certainty.

All the unearned increment of hereditary influence makes this way. The children of slaves may have but feeble aspirations after a larger life, but the children of freemen who shall bind? the aspiration for room and air and possibility is in their very blood—it is born in them, they drink it in with their mother’s milk, and thus the powers that would bind find their task grow heavier with the years. We often mourn over the heredity of evil, and in this place I will not attempt to dispute the verdict of science on the subject, but surely I may claim that we should also rejoice in the heredity of good. The blood of freemen is the mightiest seed of liberty.

Not only so, but think of the atmosphere we breathe, educationally, politically, religiously, the very air is laden with freedom-giving powers; books, pictures, schools, laws, all these are driving in upon us the inalien-

able dignity of free life. If any of us are foolish enough to desire it, we shall find that we cannot escape the contagion of these modern ideas, and, thank God, they are not microbes to be dreaded, they are free powers to be welcomed.

Another tendency we must not forget, for it contains a practical exhortation to each conscience, lies in the fact, that every free man feels that through his very liberty he is laid under a debt that can only be discharged by labouring to free others—

“Truest freedom is to share  
All the chains our brothers wear,  
And with heart and hand to be  
Earnest to make others free.”

And so every group of free souls, by the impulse of heredity, by the vitality that comes through the atmosphere of life, and by the momentum of indebtedness, become valiant, and in time irresistible propagandists of freedom. They do this, they must do this, by forces they may not be able to analyse, forces over which they have no control, but forces that drive them on, because God is in them.

Brothers, it is quite time that we learned to read history aright; we should then see that from age to age, and dynasty to dynasty, and nation to nation, God has been inspiring and directing the steps of men into a larger place. The mightiest force in the world's story is not that of armies or navies or statecraft, it is the spiritual, and the genius of the spiritual is emancipation.

Three hundred years ago, William of Holland was a champion for religious freedom against the most awful odds. When he was almost overwhelmed, one of his

generals wrote to him, inquiring if he had succeeded in effecting a treaty with a foreign power—France or England—such as would secure him aid. His brave answer was, “ You ask me if I have made a treaty for aid with any great foreign power; and I answer, that, before I undertook the cause of the oppressed Christians in these provinces, I made a close alliance with the King of Kings, and I doubt not He will give us the victory.” All the world knows how that victory was magnificently won, and every power, every man that enlists in the cause of freedom, in his very enlistment secures the abiding alliance of the Lord of Hosts.

In our own spiritual life we shall all have to learn that

## II. SUPREME EMANCIPATION IS IN JESUS CHRIST.

“ If the Son make you free, ye shall be free indeed.” “ The Lion of Judah breaks every chain.” In Him “ Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” That is the true keynote to the mission of Jesus. How wondrously real is the freedom He gives! its genuineness is its glory. Freedom in His age was burlesqued till it had become a vague ideal rather than a substantial heritage. The Jews claimed political liberty, but they were in reality the subjects of Rome; they claimed religious freedom, but they were in reality slaves to the letter; they claimed moral freedom, but they were really the bondmen of sin. Right throughout the world you find that in that ancient time freedom was burlesqued and parodied, just as it is often now, by the victims of degrading habit shouting, “ Britannia rules the waves, and Britons never, never shall be slaves,” while all the time they know nothing of its beauty and power—but the Son

of man has come to strip away all disguises, to tear away the mask, that the beams of its radiant beauty may stream in hope upon the wearied eyes of men.

Think how tremendous was the aim that Christ set before Him, to make all men free, the fit and the unfit, the aspiring and the brutally content. He saw around Him man in slavery to man, race to race, men trembling before priestcraft, and those who were politically and ecclesiastically free in a worse bondage to degrading passions. He could put his finger on no realm of life or thought that was not crowded with the machinery of oppression.

Various modes of emancipation had been tried and they had all failed. Force had been tried, and I have no word of protest to utter against force being used when all else fails—man of peace as I am—yet I am bound to judge that, over and over again, the sword, when used to smite oppression has been a holy thing ; but on the largest scale force always fails ; had Jesus willed it 10,000 swords would have leaped from their scabbards at His word, but such a liberty would have been merely national, and only political.

Laws had been tried and laws had failed ; a monarch with the stroke of his pen may make a slave a free man, but he cannot give him fitness for liberty, and without fitness freedom is always uncertain and fickle. The heart of liberty does not lie in any political constitution, it is only to be found in personal character.

Civilisation had been tried, and is being tried. Every step of civilisation is a conquest, but in the victory is the seed of a fresh servitude. Man conquers nature, and yet how often he becomes her slave ; men invent

machinery, and yet the workers tell us they have become the serfs of the very machines they control, that their hours and wages and habits are determined by machines—that is the cry we hear—it is not all true, but there is truth in it; we become slaves of custom, taste, etiquette and fashion. I know no serf more servile than the dandy who is panic-stricken if his tie is not the newest shade, or the lady who is hysterical if she offends one of the regulations of Mrs. Beeton's book on “Good Manners.”

All these had failed—all these fail to-day, and yet calmly, surely, and divinely, Christ essayed this tremendous task, and I know of no evidence more convincing of the divinity of Jesus, than the bold way in which this Carpenter's Son attempted what all else had failed to do, and in the supreme way in which He succeeded. Christ knew the philosophy of emancipation, many of us have it still to learn.

“A ship has struck on a sunken reef. There she lies a mile from land—with all the ocean before her, and yet she moves not. What will make her move? The mechanical resources of our time could bring an enormous accumulation of force to bear upon her, but under all its pressure she will remain stationary. If you increase the dragging power beyond a certain point, you will wrench her asunder, limb from limb, but you will not win her forward upon her voyage. No, not this way will she be set free to make her passage. How then? let the tide rise and the ship with it; now you may heave off your hawsers, and send away your tugs. Hoist the sail and the ship will sail away like a bird upon the wing.”

You don't free the world from the awful rocks of cruelty and sin on which it is stranded by dragging, but by lifting, and nothing lifts into spiritual movement and aspiration like tides of truth, therefore says Jesus, "My truth shall make you free." Wisest words from the blessed Lord.

See how wondrously His truth makes for emancipation. He taught the truth about God—blot that out from the thought of men and you take from life its stay, security and song. He taught that God was love! and so He breaks our enslavement to fate—that God was a Spirit, requiring spiritual worship, and thus chains of superstition were rent asunder. He taught the truth about man! He gave us a truer conception of the splendid mystery of life, He lifted our notions of inherent human greatness, and that makes for freedom. Christ helps us to see through the sin and shame of men the possibility of a radiant and eternal salvation. He regarded man as fallen, but magnificent in his ruin. Beneath the vilest He saw a soul capable of an endless growth, and so He implants within all who approach the germ of self-respect—and self-respect is the strength and fibre of liberty. Then our Lord unfolds the visions of immortality, and more, far more than words can state, His hope of immortal life enlarges and dignifies life; as the creature of to-day I may be bound, but as a child of the Eternal, to what bondage shall I dare submit? This gives martyrs an invincibility that drives death back, and makes the flames that consume, a mighty chariot of flame. Wise beyond words was the freeing method employed by Jesus. He relies upon mighty truths, which, being themselves divine and omnipotent, ensure an abiding triumph.

The liberty that Christ gives is bigger, more all-inclusive, than we often think ; it involves political citizenship. The Gospel does not directly interfere with political issues, but it powerfully affects them ; it does it not by theories or constitutions, but by truths ; you see that if God is a Spirit, and man is His redeemed child, then before that sublime spiritual equality all our social distinctions vanish, and ruler and ruled become one. It involves mental independence, no serfdom is so awful and so degrading as that which restricts and darkens the mind. He who fetters the body is bad, but he who fetters the mind is a hundredfold worse, and the first task Christ had to perform in His age was to set the Jewish mind free from the traditions in which it was bound ; again and again has Jesus had to do this in age after age ; for men show a fatal tendency to bind their limbs in truths which when once accepted and established become traditions, compelling an unintelligent, and often servile allegiance. Christ fires the mind by forcing upon it the sacred responsibility of thought, and refusing to permit it to shoulder its task upon either church or priest. He gives a liberty that is moral and spiritual, and surely this is freedom of the highest type—free here, and man is free indeed—the body may be bound, industry may be shackled, citizenship may be denied, the means of culture may be but scanty, but he who has free communion with God, who can dare to gaze upon the divine face, who is unshackled and spontaneous in heart and motive, he is free indeed—so free that like Bunyan or Bradford or Howard, he can laugh any bondage to scorn, and see the skies of freedom through any prison wall.

It is not too much to say that all Truth makes free.

Let no man fear the light, chains are in the darkness ; to know nature is to gain freedom with regard to her, to know her fully is to delight in her ; to know God is to cease to be afraid of Him, to know Him fully is to love Him fully ; to know man is to have fellowship, and to know him fully is to delight in a sure and eternal brotherhood. Why, then, such suspicion of dogma ? I know not, dogma is simply stated truth, and truth makes men free. The laws of nature are discoveries, the laws of God are revelations—the former are found out, the latter are given, given most by Jesus Christ ; the former are confessedly imperfect, but the latter are full-orbed and complete, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever ; the former demand our consent, the latter demand our allegiance and homage, and just in proportion as submission is entire and abiding, is freedom joyous and eternal.

Liberty of the sweetest truest type is only to be found in God. Some time ago an ocean steamer brought over a large number of caged birds. In mid-ocean one restless bird escaped from his cage. In ecstasy he swept through the air, away and away from his prison. How he bounded with outspread wings ! Freedom ! how sweet he thought it. Across the pathless waste he disappeared ; but after hours had passed, to the amazement of the crew, he appeared again, struggling toward the ship with heavy wing. Panting and breathless he settled upon the deck. Far, far out upon the boundless deep he had sought wearily and painfully for rest ; the ship was no more a prison, but now a home. And so I think of the human heart that breaks away from the restraints of religion ; with buoyant wing, at first, he

bounds away from church—the prison, and from God—the prison, but if he is not lost in the remorseless deep, he comes back again, with eager, panting heart, to church—the home, and to God—the home.

Liberty is not vagrancy, it is reconciliation and harmony with God and the right; may it be our joy now. Amen!



## REAL RELIGION.

By REV. J. TOLEFREE PARR.

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“Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”—JAMES i. 27.

IT is a singular fact, and one fraught with much encouragement to thoughtful Christians, that the opposition avowedly to Christianity has, upon examination, frequently proved to be opposition, not to Christianity itself, but to some misconception or misrepresentation of it. Among these misconceptions and misrepresentations two have been most common and most mischievous. One is, that personal religion, as taught by Christianity, is a selfish individualism, the saving of the Christian’s own soul; that the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end of religion, according to Christianity, is how—

“To make my own election sure,  
And when I fail on earth, secure  
A mansion in the skies.”

And the other is, that while Christianity insists upon the realisation of great spiritual experiences, and even speaks of raptures, visions, and ecstasies, it is indifferent to ethics or conduct. Against these two misconceptions the

Apostle James here protests with all the strength of his apostolic authority. "Faith," says he, "without works is dead." If your religion stops short at your own conversion it is radically deficient. True Christianity is the very opposite of selfish individualism. That great experience of personal regeneration manifests itself in works, and particularly in works of mercy.

In the next chapter he says—"What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, but have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone." And here again he says—"Pure religion is to visit the widow and the fatherless." And so far from Christianity being indifferent to conduct, the only Christianity acceptable to God our Father is the Christianity of an unspotted life. In other words, real religion, according to Christianity, is—I. Active Philanthropy; II. Personal Purity.

I. It is ACTIVE PHILANTHROPY. In the fact that it is (1) *Altruistic*. It goes outside of itself. After regeneration, the main current of the Christian life flows outward. Immediately the soul is brought into harmony with God by regenerating grace, the God-like impulse possesses it, and the believer ceases to live for himself, and begins to live for others. Like God Himself, who does not sit upon a white throne in some beautiful world, with ten thousand times ten thousand saints and angels for ever on their faces before Him adoring. No; the God of the Bible is always pouring Himself out in

new creations and in new benedictions upon His children. God our Father longs for and lives for the happiness of all His creatures. And was not this the religion of Jesus Christ? He declared—"The Son of Man is come, not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many." He was the Divine Altruist who lived and died for others, and taught His disciples for evermore that pure religion and undefiled consists not in getting, having, or being served, but in giving, serving, and sacrificing for the good of others. This is the very essence of Christianity. To be saved according to Jesus Christ is, first of all, to be brought into harmony with God by regenerating grace; then by this great experience the centre of life is shifted from self to God, and henceforth God lives in the believer, and through him God's will is done amongst men. He ceases to live for himself, and henceforth lives for others.

(2.) It is *sympathetic*. It not only goes outside of itself, but it goes outside of itself to the most needy. God loved a *lost* world. Christ came "to seek and to save the lost." When He saw the multitude, as sheep without a shepherd, He was moved with compassion on them. Thereby He created a new ethical tradition. Among all the great men of that great time there were none who felt for the common people. Horace said—"I hate the vulgar crowd, and keep it at a distance." But Jesus was filled with compassion for them, and moved in and out among them, healing their sicknesses and binding up their broken hearts. He, then, is most genuinely godly, he is the true Christian whose heart is full of pity for the weak, the suffering, the sorrowing—"the widow and the fatherless." Here, as elsewhere in the Scriptures, the

extreme cases are mentioned. Consider, for a moment, the meaning of these words—"widow," "fatherless." Stand by the open grave of the bread-winner as the widow takes her long, last, lingering look at the wreath-covered coffin, and then turns away, her little children clinging to her skirts, to face the cold hard world alone, the strong arm gone for ever from her side. Or see her later on, as I have seen her, in a scantily-furnished chamber in a dismal court of the great city, wearing out her life in her effort to beat back the wolf of hunger from her door and save her children from perishing, and sometimes almost failing to do that, and in the agony of her despair tempted to say, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" If there is an object worthy of sympathy it is the widow—"And the fatherless." Do any of us here realise the speechless woe of the fatherless? Pardon this personal reference, but the darkest day in my young life was the day when the news came that I was fatherless. I walked out among the hills of Derbyshire, and as I recalled the loving counsels and saintly character of my father, and then looked out on life with all its unimaginable terrors to a child, and said to myself, "I shall have no father to counsel me, to protect me, to help me," an unutterable sense of desolation swept down upon my spirit. But I had a good mother left. Alas, there are thousands of fatherless and motherless bairns in this land, and I say deliberately these stand nearest to God's heart, and if we are God-like they stand nearest to our hearts also.

But (3.) It is *Practical*. It visits the widow and fatherless. Pure religion not only feels sympathy, but expresses it in practical ministries. God's sympathy for lost humanity is practical. He "gave His only begotten

Son." The Incarnation, Bethlehem, Calvary, the Resurrection and the Ascension—these tell the story of God's practical sympathy. When Jesus was moved with compassion for the multitude, He met their immediate physical necessities: He fed them. And His whole ministry was a ministry of doing good to the suffering, the sinning, the sorrowing.

The chief glory of Christianity has ever been its practical sympathy. In every age it has created beneficent ministries for the needy, for "the widow and the fatherless." The monuments of Christianity are not churches and chapels only, but orphanages, hospitals, and almshouses. To-day she perpetuates the ministry of her ascended Lord by her numberless agencies of mercy and healing. And it is very significant that the revival of spiritual religion has generally begotten this philanthropic spirit. The Evangelical Revival of the last century, for instance, not only created Methodism as a great spiritual movement, but it created the philanthropic impulse which abolished slavery, repealed the Corn Laws, created the Sunday School movement and the movement for popular education, and, later still, the Temperance Reform; for let it never be forgotten that the Temperance Reformation is a late-born child of the Methodist Revival. It is also remarkable that great spiritual teachers have also become philanthropists, sometimes almost in spite of themselves. No preacher of our age insisted more strongly upon the spiritual truths of Christianity than the late Rev. C. H. Spurgeon. Yet he had to build an orphanage. "If," says General Booth, "anyone had told me when I commenced my mission that I should have to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and shelter the

homeless, I should have said, 'No, no, that is not my special work. My business is to preach the Gospel, to save the souls of the people.'" But General Booth's heart had not come up into contact with the Father-heart of God for long, and at the same time mixed with destitute outcast humanity before he had to build his "shelters" and begin to feed the hungry. The new evangelism which is crowding the once deserted sanctuaries of the older Methodism in the great cities, and bringing the poor by hundreds to Christ, shows practical sympathy for the needy. It employs Sisters of the people, and devotes large attention to social agencies. And so, when foolish academical Christians sneer at the "Social Gospel" as something new, our reply is—"It is as old as Christianity itself; indeed, it is a distinct return to apostolic religion. It comes straight from the heart of God, and is a re-incarnation of the essential spirit of Christianity to meet the spiritual needs of our modern cities."

II. PERSONAL PURITY.—There are three thoughts which I want to impress upon you this morning in regard to personal purity, viz., its difficulty, its duty, its possibility. (1) *Its difficulty.* We frankly admit at once that an unspotted life is difficult. "The very words," as Phillips Brooks says, "have a far-away sound about them." We may have dreamed of the unspotted life when we were boys, but the dream has passed away. As the silent-footed years have come and gone, what changes they have wrought; and, alas, in how many cases changes for the worse. Conscience has become seared, reverence has turned to scorn, gentleness to cruelty, earnestness to flippancy, and enthusiasm has died down into the cold ashes of cynicism. We tolerate evils now we are grown

men and grey which in our hot youth we denounced with unsparing speech. We may have dreamed of the unspotted life for our own boys, but as they have grown up into their teens and succumbed to "the sins that so easily beset," we have dashed the tears from our eyes and comforted ourselves as best we could by saying, "Ah, well, they are chips off the old block." And thus unconsciously we lower the standards of purity, truth, and righteousness. And we come to regard it as quite inevitable that in a spotted world like this we, too, should become spotted. Hereditary evil is strong within us. There is a fatal responsiveness within to the temptations that are without. How many begin life in spotted homes! One of the most heart-breaking facts of our modern life is this, that myriads of sweet babes come straight from God into homes that are not fit for them. Alas, many around Surrey Chapel are miniature hells. Later on the children must go to school, and the black flood of evil flows round them and flows into them. By-and-by the boys must enter into business, and business life, as you all know, is honeycombed with evil. Maxims, customs, and practices which do not harmonise with a white conscience or the word of God are almost universal. Business men on our church roll-books are heard occasionally repeating the worldling's dictum, "An honest man can't live in business nowadays." And if later on they claim their rights as citizens and take their places in politics, they find them wofully corrupt. And so the stains fall thick upon them until they come at last to regard themselves as the victims of this spotted world. How few men at fifty have an unspotted reputation! Of how many such are there not dark whispers of the "wild-oat sowing"

of their youth. Every man who knows his own heart knows it is the seat of debased motives, low desires, and wicked passions. And it may be, as some present look within, there are sins that burn in their very eyes which they dare not mention to the dearest friend of life. A young man is leaving his sweet Christian home for the great city. His mother, with tears in her eyes, says to him, "Now, my son, whatever you do, keep out of bad company and keep yourself pure." The youth looks up, and replies with utmost self-confidence, "Never fear, mother, I shall keep straight." Alas, six months have not passed away before he is stained through with the stain of sins his mother never heard of; and his moral deterioration goes on until he joins the sceptical and lecherous crowd of young fellows who sneer at purity as an impossibility. How many in our congregations, if they cared to tell the preacher what they thought, would bluntly tell him, "It is all very well, sir, for you to preach about the unspotted life, but in my business, in my workshop, in my social life, in the public position I occupy,—I tell you, sir, an unspotted life is a dream." And so the vision fades, and the spots fall thick upon us, until we rather glory that we are no worse than we are. "I may be dishonest," says one, "but I am not licentious." "I may be heartless," says another, "but I am not dishonest." "I may be occasionally the worse for drink," says a third, "but I am not miserly." If in the whole area of our character we can find one white spot we take to our souls the flattering unction that we are not so bad after all.

My brethren, you may write it down in big, bold letters that the unspotted life is *difficult*, DIFFICULT, DIFFICULT.

But it is our (2.) *Duty* to live it. Christianity demands that we *shall* live it. The only religion acceptable to God is the religion of an unspotted life. The question as to what is true religion has exercised the minds of men a great deal. Schleiermacher said it was feeling; Kant said the same; while Matthew Arnold said it was "morality touched by emotion." Yes, it is that, my brethren; but is it not much more than that? Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself. this is the fulfilment of the whole law." Clearly, then, Christianity does not supersede the ten commandments; it includes them. No man is a Christian who does not keep the ten commandments. It is true that the great doctrine of Christianity is regeneration. But there can be no regeneration of the heart without the regeneration of the life. And the force of regenerating grace does not spend itself in religious exercises merely: it transforms life, it moralises conduct. If morality without religion is cold, religion without morality is a sham.

It is a grave scandal that so many people have a wonderful talent for religious emotion, but look down on honesty, truthfulness, and generosity as rather commonplace virtues and beneath their particular notice. My brethren, this is sheer paganism. After all, conduct is the main thing—three-fourths of religion, as well as of life—and if your religion does not change your conduct it is not the religion of Christ. For a man to say, "Oh, I am very religious; I soar to heaven on wings of faith and devotion; I have glorious times and can shout 'Hallelujah' as loudly as anyone"; and at the same time for him not to practise the ordinary virtues of truth-

fulness, honesty, straightforwardness, and unselfishness—I tell you it is rottenness and spiritual suicide. It means moral disintegration, it is the way to all that is base and unholy; it makes the name of Christianity a byword of reproach and shame, and is the greatest hindrance to the progress of Christ's kingdom among men. This, then, is the standard, "Unspotted from the world." Christianity will not lower the standard. She does not say to a man, "Now, your case is a very hard case. Heredity has worked itself out on you in dreadful form. The evil taint has come down to you from your ancestors in an accentuated degree, and really, considering your strong hereditary impulse towards evil, I will make some concession to you. I will allow a few spots in your life." No, no, NO. Nor does she say to another, "Considering your extraordinary temptations, I will consent to let you live below the standard. I will allow a few spots in your life." No, no, NO. In all the hereditary weakness and helplessness of our poor human nature; amid the thickest contagion of human sin, Christianity demands from every one of us an unspotted life.

And now let us turn to (3.) the *Possibility* of the unspotted life. Christianity makes this possible to us by (a) Revealing man's supernatural origin and destiny. Purity is not organic; it is not natural, because man has fallen. But Christianity reminds us that man is supernatural. In him dust and deity combine. He has a moral sense. He has, he *is* an immortal spirit. Heredity is a factor, but there is another and a deeper factor. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and set the children's teeth on edge." That is heredity. But in the very next verse the Lord, through His prophet, says, "All

souls are Mine, saith the Lord." Every human soul or spirit is a direct creation of God. Man's spirit came from God, and is going back to God. Suppose a pure Christian maiden from a godly country home is by some awful fate compelled to spend six months in a West End hell of infamy as servant, what will keep her pure? What but this reflection?—"I do not belong to this hell, I came from a pure Christian home. I belong to that home, and in six months I am going back to it." So man's highest being came from God, and is going back to God. Let him realise the dignity and greatness of his being, and live worthily. Or take another illustration. You have doubtless seen Sir Noel Paton's great masterpiece, "The man with the muckrake." There you saw the man grovelling in the filth of the gutter, seeking in vain for treasure, while right above him, poised in mid-air, is a lovely angel with outspread wings, and in her fair hands she holds right over the head of the man a shining crown. As you looked at the picture you could hardly refrain from saying, "Look up, man! What are you doing grovelling in the filth of the gutter? Look up! See, there's a crown above your head." Even so, Christianity is a revelation of God; but it is a revelation of man also—man made but a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour. Thus Christianity helps men to live the unspotted life by reminding them of their crown of immortal being and destiny. (b) Christianity presents men with a sublime example of an unspotted life in Jesus Christ. My brethren, there *was* one life unspotted from the world. From the moment He slept as a babe in the rude cradle of Bethlehem till He hung like a drooping lily on the Cross, never the breath of the stain of sin passed

upon Him, and He went back to God as pure as when He came from God. Ah, that is the miracle of all the ages ! And “He has left us an example that we should follow His steps.” It is always easier to conquer a defeated foe. Let us never forget that sin is a conquered foe. Christ Jesus overcame, and so may we. But let us remember that Christ’s method of keeping His purity was not the ascetic or negative method, but the positive, the philanthropic. He kept His own purity by smiting impurity wherever He saw it, and by rescuing others from its power. Even so, we shall not keep our purity by retiring from politics, from business, from social life, and narrowing down our life to the walls of a monastery or hermit’s cell. Even if we did so Satan would find out our dwelling place, and the flesh would still be with us. No, no. Let us rather go straight out into life smiting wrong, and sin, and impurity, wherever we find them, and rescuing from their deadly power our brothers and sisters. Thus, and thus only, shall we keep our purity. (c) Christianity makes the unspotted life possible *by providing a Saviour*. It is not enough for Christianity to reveal to man his supernatural origin and destiny, to hold up before him the perfect example of an unspotted life in Jesus Christ. She offers him a Saviour. Mr. Griffiths John, the Chinese missionary, tells the story of a cultured Chinaman, who came to him after a sermon, and made this remarkable confession—“I have seen for some time,” said he, “that not only was Confucius, the founder of our religion, a great teacher, but Jesus Christ, the founder of your religion, was a great teacher also ; but I have discovered this morning that Jesus Christ is more than a Great Teacher : He is a Great Saviour.”

Yes, dear friends, Jesus Christ is a Saviour. He takes away the burden of guilt from the conscience. No man can live the unspotted life until the guilt of his black past is blotted out, and this can be realised through Christ alone. “There is *none other name* under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved” but the name of Jesus. And He alone imparts strength to live the unspotted life. He is able to save and to keep even unto the uttermost. From the days of the Apostles till now the Church has had her witnesses to the keeping power of Christ. To-day, blessed be God, in workshop and warehouse, in every rank of social life, in home and in Parliament, there are godly ones living the spotless life. The one condition of this life is surrender to Jesus Christ. Through Him alone is this life possible. Two of the best known laws of electrical science are the laws of approximation and harmonisation. If you stand on the stool with its glass feet (glass being a non-conductor of electricity) and reach out your hand towards the electric machine, the electricity will positively flash out to meet you. If you place the iron bar parallel with the magnet the bar becomes magnetised. Even so, if you, in all your human weakness, will stand out from the world and consecrate yourself to Christ, He will meet you. If you place your will perfectly parallel with His blessed will the infinite energy of His grace will enter your life and you shall be kept by His power “unspotted from the world.” May this blessed life be yours. Amen.



## RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENCE.

BY REV. J. T. BARKBY.

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“But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise.”—MATTHEW xxii. 5.

CARLYLE’s Professor one day finds himself in what he calls, “The centre of Indifference, through which whoso travels from the Negative Pole to the Positive must necessarily pass.” Whether that is a philosophy in harmony with the indisputable facts of experience may be open to question, but if indifference be what we conceive, not merely unconcern, but apathy, want of feeling, downright insensibility, then it is certain Jewish indifference to Christ found its centre in its Leaders and Law-givers. For consummate callousness to the claims of Christ the Representatives and Authorities of the Jewish nation had no compeers. For three years His conduct had been exposed to their keenest scrutiny. What He had said and done, and shown Himself to be, none knew better than they, yet He had won from them neither regard nor recognition. There, in their very midst, lived One who was moving their country from centre to circumference; preaching a doctrine such as won from His enemies the confession, “Never man spake like this

man ; ” working miracles evidencing a pity as omnipotent as their power ; demanding and urging acceptance of Himself as the Son of God, the Redeemer and Saviour of the world ; “ The best of men that e'er wore earth about Him ; ” whose moral majesty made men feel in His presence that they were in the presence of God, and yet none of these things awoke in them either enthusiasm or response. They were there, side by side with the highest and best the world can know or conceive, unmoved and untouched ; so morally drugged that even the personal Christ living and moving and having His being among them could not galvanise them into sensibility. Surely indifference to Christ was never more accentuated ! Could we but think ourselves back so as to feel it in all its reality and intensity, we should find ourselves face to face with a spiritual catastrophe that would make us wish our head were “ waters, and our eyes a fountain of tears, that we might weep day and night ” for these slain of the Jews.

This is precisely the charge Jesus Christ urges against the Chief Priests and Pharisees by this, as well as the two previous parables. He had called, but they had refused ; He had stretched out His hand, but they had not regarded it ; they had set at nought all His counsel, and would have none of His reproof. “ They made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise.”

I.—IN THE ATTITUDE OF THESE JEWISH LEADERS AND OFFICIALS TOWARDS OUR LORD WE HAVE ILLUSTRATED AN ATTITUDE MEN ASSUME TOWARDS RELIGION TO-DAY.

They make light of it: treat with indifference the

redeeming and sanctifying ministries of life. There is surely little need to argue the relationship of Jesus Christ to religion. Is not His pre-eminence in this domain everywhere acknowledged? It is in Jesus Christ we are shown what God is and would have us be. It is by Jesus Christ God makes it possible for us to realise the great end and purpose of our being. It is by Jesus Christ God addresses His appeal to us for this. In Jesus Christ is our only hope of salvation. Outside of Him it is impossible for any man to realise himself. To be apathetic at His call is, therefore, to cut ourselves off from God's great salvation. While it is not this aspect of truth we mean to labour particularly, still it cannot be too strongly emphasised. It matters not what other ministry we heed, if we are indifferent to Jesus Christ God's purposes in us are made of none effect.

But let us not confine the movements of Divinity within too narrow a compass. In Jesus Christ abides every perfection, and every life must find in Him its *summum bonum*, yet Jesus Christ is not the only voice of God to man, though every other voice must be interpreted through His. God has other avenues to the human soul; other forces that do His pleasure in redeeming our life from poverty, fragmentariness and imperfection, to some of which even those are occasionally deaf who have professedly lent an ear to the voice of Christ's supplication. Has God no relationship to the work of His hands? Is He, as Carlyle suggests, "An absentee God, sitting idle, ever since the first Sabbath, at the outside of His universe, and seeing it go?" Does He not reside in and act through all the energies and forces of nature? Are they not all, merciless though they sometimes appear, pervaded with

a wise and beneficent purpose, our friends, our teachers? Then to see not God's glory, and hear not His voice in nature is surely to be indifferent to Him. What is the Spirit of truth in man but "the presence and activity in our thought and feeling of the God of truth?" Then to trifle with its impulses, to check them, to stand unmoved by them is to be guilty of the sin of religious indifference. What is conscience, "that voice rising from the depths of our being, which speaks of duty and troubles, if it does not destroy every excuse we make for disobedience;" what is this but a Divine Messenger and Guide? Then to play with conscientious impulse and scruple, to try to argue right what is plainly wrong, is to be guilty of making light of God's call. What are the businesses, the friendships, the pleasures of life: fields wherein we may win material substance and honours, and indulge ourselves in all forms of animal rioting? Are they not rather the angels of God to take us by the hand and prepare us for that other world where time is no more and there is no more sea? All the relationships and experiences of life are processes of discipline to knit into finer and ever lovelier shape the fabric of our character. Behind all there is a spiritual significance, and that is a most fatal condition of religious torpor which is blind to the spiritual purposes of daily duty and discipline, and loses all hold of the Eternal in grasping the temporal.

We must learn that this world is one room in Our Father's house. The Great White Throne is in the midst of our work-a-day life. Everywhere and in everything we may see God, hear His voice, and feel the constraints of His eternal purposes. There is not within us, there

is not without us a bush that may not, and should not, blaze with the radiance of the Divine glory.

“ Around our life-time golden ladders rise ;  
And up and down the skies,  
With wingéd sandals shd.,  
The Angels come and go, the Messengers of God.”

But we may live where God’s Angels are and see them not ; be within the circumference of the Divine call and hear it not ; right where God is working and know it not ; in the midst of all spiritual realities but unconcerned, insensible of them, and that is the tragedy of making light of the call of God.

If this be so, then religious indifference is one of the most common features of our modern life. Our communities swarm with men and women who are insensible to these visions and voices of the God of infinite love. What is nature to the majority of us—suns and seas, mountains and vales, flowers and fruits? Yes, and but little more. It is rare that like the man of olden time we get there such a vision of God, and feel so much His presence that it becomes to us the House of God and the Gate of Heaven ; rare, that through its ministry life becomes a larger and richer good. A cardinal defect of the old pagan mythologies was that they impersonated the visible elements of nature. The insignificant and the infinite alike were so crammed with Divinity that men fell down before them and worshipped. To us, nature has become atheistic, “ without God.” We tramp the earth so heedless, so regardless of God that the voice of the Great Creator is lost in the mighty tone. Can it be said that men reverence truth and conscience when at the crack of the party whip they are ever ready to fall

into line ; when for money, for social position, for a comfortable and easy time they sink their convictions and conscientious scruples ? If this country had been faithful to its convictions and conscience, our huge ironclads and the mighty battalions of our soldiery would not have been employed to crush a brilliant and heroic nation in its attempts to save a down-trodden people from extermination, as well as to prop up the throne of one of the greatest monsters the world has known.\* May God shake us from our lethargy ! How little of God and Divine things do men get out of the businesses, the politics, the " trivial rounds and common tasks " of life ? There are few Dr. Maclures, for whose imperishable portrait we are indebted to " Ian Maclaren," whose duties left him few opportunities to attend the services of the Kirk, but who kept fresh his spiritual springs by an unceasing and loving devotion to duty's call. Think, too, of the ten thousand temples of our land with their hallowed and hallowing associations ; their saving forces of praise and prayer ; and what is more than all, the gospel of Jesus Christ, a gospel of pity that should move every heart, a gospel which is the only power of God unto the salvation of men, and yet how many remain callous to its appeals ? Men will sit in our churches with their ears stuffed ; they assume the attitude of devotion, but their thoughts are in the ends of the earth. Every Sabbath day our sanctuaries are partially peopled by those who for the time being sit in the very thick of those forces capable of imparting to their life its spiritual significance and sacred grandeur, and who, for aught one can see, are as insensible thereto as the pews they occupy. And, what is sadder

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\* Reference to the recent blockade of Crete.

still, there are ten thousand times ten thousand who scarcely ever dream of going where the gospel is preached, or give a thought to Calvary's sacrifice, without which their redemption were impossible.

Everywhere are those who make light of religion, men whose interests never dip beneath the surface of things, and who lose all sight of the infinite background standing behind all finite things ; men who "spend their years on earth in shallow enjoyment or selfish ease, careless of the world's sorrow, and indifferent to its sin, blind to its finest beauties and most thrilling tragedies ; moved by no great love, actuated by no high hope, and stirred by no holy enthusiasm ;" men who heed not the God within nor the God without ; men who feel no more the constraints of the cross than a corpse the fragrance of the flowers that bloom on its grave ; men who are religiously insensible. Dr. Whyte declares that a spiritual stupidity has taken possession of one out of every two of the children born, even in the most religious households. They have become "utterly insensible to everything intellectual, spiritual, moral, noble, and above the world that knows not God." In His day Jesus Christ startled men by speaking of certain of the living as if they were dead. If by a dead man we are to understand an inert, unconscious soul, then the world is full of them.

## II.—THE SECRET OF SUCH CONDUCT.

And now arises the question, how come men to act so ? What are the secret forces, the operating causes of such conduct ?

1st. *Worldliness*. Our Lord here lays His finger upon the mainspring of the religious indifference of our time

—worldliness. They “went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise.” Men are lovers of this world rather than lovers of God, and so strong is this affection that it not infrequently leads them to turn their backs altogether upon what is spiritual and divine. That is precisely what we might expect. What is worldliness? Is it not shifting the centre from the Eternal to the temporal, from the Spiritual to the material? Then, in the nature of things, worldliness, whatever form it assumes, makes for indifference to God. The whole temper and trend of such conduct means scorn for the spiritual side of life. How effectually, alas! we know all too well.

(1.) *Lust for pleasure.* Some have thought the conduct of the first to whom Christ here refers is intended to indicate that the lust for pleasure lies at the bottom of man’s disregard for the Divine. He was a landed proprietor, and would enjoy what he had. “He went to his farm.” We may object to such an exegesis, but we shall be at one in the assertion of the truth. What a powerful presentation of this truth George Eliot has given us in the character of Tito Melema. It was never the intention of the authoress that Tito should be conceived as our ordinary bad man. He has many engaging and quite fascinating qualities. His fatal weakness is his passion for pleasure. Whate’er betides, he will enjoy himself. If he can do so without violating any of the sanctities of life so much the better. He has no wish to wrong any-one; he much prefers not to do so, but he will unhesitatingly if it is the only way he can accomplish his purpose. He is not licentious, yet in his passion for pleasure, he will wreck the life of the little blue-eyed peasant girl.

He is not without a sense of justice and gratitude, yet he will throw to the wolves the one friend of his life as soon as his presence becomes inconvenient. He is quite willing that between himself and Romola a loose sort of love-line should be stretched, but he will never allow her high ideals of virtue to intercept his plans. For the lust of self-gratification he casts aside every moral restraint, and tramples all the eternal verities under his feet.

Alas that Tito Melema should have such company in his fall! In modern life there are plenty of such men, men with so savage a lust for pleasure that they make light of every Divine monition. They hear God in His thunders, and see God in His lightnings; they know well the meaning of Duty, Conscience, Redemption, and Calvary, and to all such voices they will listen so long as their sanctions indulge their passions; but once there is a conflict and they are immediately arrayed on the side of the vivid and actual pleasures of the present, and so "the soul is starved out of them, and the vision of God withdraws itself because the surface of their life has become too obscure to reflect it, and there is developed only the animal man, in which the spiritual sense, the larger hopes, and the Diviner aspirations are shrunken into pitiable infirmity and impotence." We read the old story of Esau bartering his birthright for a mess of potage, and we are astounded that a man could so far lose all sense of the proportion of things as to throw away the spiritual headship of his family for a momentary gratification of his appetite. Believe me, that is what hundreds are doing every day. True, the lust for pleasure does not always lead to such utter indifference to God, but that is its tendency.

(2.) *Lust for money.* The other to whom Christ refers in the text was too much engrossed with merchandise to heed the invitation. What is true of the lust for pleasure is true of the lust for money. Not more effectually does the one render us indifferent to God than the other. The higher nature is not found to be helpful in business. To be ruled by truth, by conscience, by Jesus Christ, makes it vastly more tedious and difficult to acquire riches, and so their promptings, their appeals, their warnings are trampled under foot.

This world is too much with the most of us. We rarely try to get beneath the crust of circumstances that we may see in them and learn from them lessons of eternal moment. It is to the paltry gospel of "getting on" we are all apt to be too much devoted. "'Getting on' is well enough, but to put one's life into it, for the mere living to lose the ends of life, to miss the depth and dignity of being a man, and drop into the grave at last having passed by on the other side all that makes it worth while for a soul to live,—call you that 'getting on'?" It is pitiable to think of creatures who call themselves men, whose souls never thrill with enthusiasm, nor beat responsive to any compelling "Word of God," so absorbed with the pleasures and riches of this world that the Heaven of Heavens is without message or meaning to them. The mediæval legends of men selling their souls to the devil provoke us to laughter; morally they are worked out every day in the lives of many around us. Are they with you?

2ndly. *Neglect.* But may we not sometimes find the secret of religious indifference elsewhere than in worldliness? If a man mean to commit suicide he need not

pursue any such vigorously aggressive method as that of blowing out his brains with a revolver, or dashing himself down a precipice. He may perpetrate the tragedy so quietly and so gradually, though none the less surely, that even his next-door neighbour shall not know of it. He has but to neglect food, and sleep, and fresh air, and exercise and his days will be numbered. *Neglect*, that is all. So you need not encourage yourself in all forms of moral rioting to make light of the Divine realities of life, and to effectually drug your spiritual nature. You need but neglect to look at them, to keep yourself in touch with them, and your fate will be sealed. Napoleon once said, "My power would fail me were I not to support it by new achievements. Conquest has made me what I am, and conquest must maintain me." That is what every wise man sees. Action is as necessary for conservation as for creation. God is the eternal foe of all stagnation. None shall escape who *neglect* His great salvation.

Not a little of the religious indifference of our time runs back its roots to this—neglect. Men will not trouble to think of God, to search for Him, to keep themselves in touch with His redeeming influences. It is not that their philosophy of the universe rejects God, but that they rarely open their eyes wide enough to see Him there. They are not regardless of truth, and yet they resist the impulse that urges to the search of it, and play fast and loose with fixed and unquestioned conviction. The gospel invitation, it is true, is to them an invitation to a spiritual banquet, but their concern for it is too superficial to lead them to its enjoyment. They have not blasphemed Christ, but Christ has called from His Cross and they would not listen to His voice. "They have not

struck the Christ, nor spat upon Him, nor wagged the head against Him ; this is their profanity that they have crucified Him afresh by their neglect, and put Him to an open shame by their contempt.” Against such conduct we cannot too jealously guard ourselves. As the late Professor Drummond reminded us, this tendency, deep-rooted and active, exists within our nature, and so stealthily does it do its work that our powers are misdirected, dishonoured, if not destroyed, almost before we are conscious of the fact. We must bestir ourselves. It is as necessary to culture the spiritual as the physical, and if but a fraction of the time given to the gratification of the physical were devoted to the furtherance of our spiritual interests, so marked would be the change in us that men everywhere would take note of us that we had been with Jesus and had learnt of Him.

And now, ere I close, suffer me to urge upon you to lay well to heart the significance of this message. It is God’s call to cast aside your spiritual lethargy and unconcern, to “Awake to righteousness, and sin not.”

I appeal to the young. This is your day of grace. Prejudice has not yet warped your judgment ; habit has not yet fettered your will ; the material concerns of life have not yet taken away the edge from your spiritual sensibilities. Many of you have sprung out of a religious stock, and have grown up in a religious atmosphere. One of the first names you were taught to lisp was the name of Jesus, and your earliest recollections are of the crucified Nazarene. Now you would find it comparatively easy to set your life to the music of the “eternal melodies.” Will you not do so ? Will you not now determine to live and move daily in the vital atmosphere

of the Divine? Will you not this day consecrate yourself unto the Lord? Nothing would so glorify your Heavenly Father, and nothing would be so personally advantageous. This is what God asks of you; this is what I implore you to yield. Now seek a vital union with that Christ you learnt to think of at your mother's knee, that henceforth all your life may be sacred and divine. I say, *Now*. Procrastination might be fatal.

I appeal to the Religious Formalist. You, my brother, are not of those who disown God. To you God is everywhere and in everything. You are conscious of the many languages by which He speaks to men, and the many ministries by which He seeks the accomplishment of His redeeming purposes. To you the Cross is the outstanding fact of history: there is salvation for man nowhere else. Nor are you without some measure of regard for these. You talk of the heavens declaring the glory of God. You know the sacredness of truth and conscience, and all the disciplinary processes of experience. The name of Jesus is, to you, a name above every name. You have so much regard for the Divine that you erect churches for the worship of God, which, in a manner, you often participate in. And yet, in the deepest sense, God is not in your life. Your devotion is heartless, lifeless. I have read the story of certain barbarian islanders to whom was made the present of a sun-dial. They wondered at it, they venerated it, and finally built a shrine over it to protect it from the sun's rays. That is what you are doing with God. Break down the roof and let the rays of heaven stream in upon your darkened and lifeless spirit.

And what shall I say to those who have habitually

ignored the spiritual significance of life: those, who through the years have persisted in hardening their heart and stiffening their neck to the appeals of God? Do you not know the risk you are running? Do you not know that the ignoring of every Divine vision; that the stifling of every good impulse, that the rejection of every sermon is a thickening of the coat of the heart; that every year's rejection and disobedience adds thereto until that covering may become so thick as to be impenetrable? I am sometimes asked whether salvation is ever impossible. My answer is: With God, never. His love is from everlasting to everlasting. The latch of His heart is ever lifted for the very worst. What I fear most is not God, but man. "My sin cannot chill or change the love of God; but what if it so changes me that all that love never stirs me, never touches me, never wakens within me one answering throb?" That is the penalty of religious indifference, a hopeless dissimilarity of feeling with God, called in the Scriptures, death. But that, thank God, is a stage you have surely not yet reached. To save you from it God once more speaks to you, warning you of your worldliness, your neglect, your indifference to His appeals, and cries, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."



## JESUS AND THE CHILDREN.

BY REV. DANZY SHEEN.

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“And He called to Him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.”—MATT. xviii. 2-3.

THE divinity of our Lord was known to but very few of those who saw Him in the flesh. But even those who regarded Him only as man must have been struck with the originality of His doings and sayings. But I question if any of His words surprised His followers more than His utterances concerning *children*. His attitude towards child-life was an innovation in human history. The march of the old world is from the eastern gate of Eden, with its sentinels of “cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Gen. iii. 24), to the manger-cradle of Bethlehem. That cradle is the resting-place of the old world, and the starting-place of the new. It is the mountain ridge of Time beyond which the inhabitants groped beneath the North star, but we on this side of it know that the dark-

ness is past, and that the True Light shines, who makes “the sunny days of childhood.”

An eminent living author says :

“ The ancient writers, even the ancient poets, but rarely refer, even in the most cursory manner, to their early years. The cause of this reticence offers a curious problem for our inquiry, but the fact is indisputable. Whereas there is scarcely a single modern poet who has not lingered with undisguised feelings of happiness over the gentle memories of his childhood, not one of the ancient poets has systematically touched upon the theme at all. From Lydgate down to Tennyson, it would be easy to quote from our English poets a continuous line of lyric songs on the subject of boyish years.”\*

Who that has once read them can forget the pathetic lines of Hood?—

“ I remember, I remember the house where I was born,  
The little window where the sun came peeping in at morn ;  
He never came a wink too soon, nor brought too long a day,  
But now I often wish the night had borne my breath away.  
  
I remember, I remember the fir-trees dark and high,  
I used to think their slender tops were close against the sky !  
It was a childish ignorance, but now 'tis little joy  
To know I am further off from heaven than when I was a boy.”

Or Wordsworth's exquisite little poem on “ The Rainbow,” in which he declares, “ The child is father of the man.” Nor are the lines of Vaughan, the Welsh poet of the 17th century, in which he refers to his boyish days, spent in the vicinity of his native Brecon, beneath the shadow of its triple-peaked Beacons, and amid the murmurs of its clear-flowing Usk, to be forgotten :—

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\* Farrar's “ Seekers after God.”

“ By those early days, when I shined in my angel-infancy  
Before I understood this place appointed for my second race,  
Or taught my soul to fancy ought but a white, celestial thought ;  
When yet I had not wall-ed above a mile or two from my first  
love,  
And, looking back—at that short space—could see a glimpse of  
His bright face ;  
When on some gilded cloud or flower my gazing soul would dwell  
an hour,  
And in those weaker glories spy some shadows of eternity ;  
Before I taught my tongue to wound my conscience with a sinful  
sound,  
Or had the black art to dispense a several sin to every sense ;  
But felt through all this **fleshly** dress bright shoots of ever-  
lastingness.”

The old Greek in his sprightliness, and the Roman in his prowess never made such allusions as may be quoted from nearly all Christian poets. The reason is not far to seek. Childhood in ancient times had few joys, and no rights, outside Israel. The laws of those times authorised a father to put his child to death if he preferred not to bring him up, and so general was the slaughter of infant life that Augustus offered privileges to the father who would bring up a son for the Roman state. Instead of tender allusions to his childhood, the ancient poet rather felt ashamed that he had ever been a child. Jesus changed all this. You might have seen Him watching the little children’s harmless mirth in the market-place. He observed they played now at weddings and then at funerals. He heard them say, “ We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced ; we have wailed unto you, and ye have not lamented.” He was “ moved with indignation ” when His heedless followers refused little children admis-

sion into His presence. He justified the little children who sang Hosanna while,

“ Fair leaves of silvery olive  
They strewed upon the ground.”

He cautioned His disciples not to despise the little ones, because the presence-angels of God take a deep interest in them.

And when the Apostle-band, moved by ignoble ambitions, asked, “ Who, then, is greatest in the kingdom of heaven ? ” Jesus called a little child unto Him, and setting him in the midst of them, said: “ Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Among the thoughts suggested by the text are two deserving our best attention.

I. A CHILD HAS CAPACITY TO BECOME A GENUINE SUBJECT OF CHRIST.

II. CHILD-MIND IS OF SUCH A SORT, THAT IT IS THE MODEL FOR AN ADULT WHO WOULD BE A SUBJECT OF CHRIST.

These words of the Master teach us; I. THAT A LITTLE CHILD MAY BECOME A GENUINE CHRISTIAN. I am not saying that an infant, dying before moral accountability, goes to heaven. Few, if any, dispute that nowadays. Nor do I mean that a sick child may obtain meetness for an early heaven. There is an unhealthy literature that represents all pious children as dying, instead of living to be useful. Hence some superstitious people think it a sign of a morbid mind, or an early doom, if a boy or girl seriously consider the Saviour’s claims.

Such ideas are devil-born. Christ wants pious children and young people to take part with Him in making all things new. Nor do I teach, as some, that because our adorable Redeemer purchased us all by His death, that, therefore, a child does not need spiritual renewal. The Master has settled that, "Except anyone (man or child), be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3). Even they who do not openly maintain that youth must first "sow the wild oats," frequently betray a lurking scepticism as to the genuineness of child-discipleship:—"The little things are so fickle. They don't know their own minds. They have no stability;" and many such like things have we heard; not a word of which, however, do we believe. Pray, what requirement of Christ is it that a young child who has come to the age of moral accountability cannot comply with?

1. Is it *Faith*? Jesus taught us that whosoever *believeth* shall not perish. Paul told the jailer to *believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ. We are justified by *faith*. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Evidently faith is a leading requirement. Can a child believe? Promise your little son that you will give him a new knife next week and see if he will not believe you! Tell your little daughter that you will take her with you to London next week, and will she not believe? Rev. George Lamb, my first superintendent, used to say, "It is natural for a child to believe testimony, and will be sure to do so until it has been deceived by wicked lies." It is as natural for a child to believe as to breathe. Indeed, I have heard parents say to their little ones, "You must not believe everybody;" a necessary caution, no doubt, but every year we live receiving such lessons, we are growing away

from that state of mind which makes it easy to believe and be a Christian. A child has an exuberance of faith.

2. Can a child *hope*? Paul places hope second in the trinity of Christian graces. He speaks of God as the God of hope. Christ intends His church to be a hopeful church. As hope is more characteristic of childhood and youth than of age, a child is more eligible for the kingdom of Christ than an aged person. The natural powers of child-life are favourable to salvation. As Christians we should *abound* in hope. This is easy to a child. A Christian Church with a preponderance of aged people in it *may* be a hopeful church, but with a preponderance of youthful members it *must* be hopeful. A child will hope where an adult will despair.

3. *Love* is another leading Christian grace; yea, the greatest of the three, the crowning grace. Can a little child love? I need not ask you who have felt your little children's arms twined around your necks, and their little lips pressed against your own. You say, "They are little bundles of love." "Yes," says one, "they can love their earthly friends, but you are talking about love to an unseen Saviour."

But can not a child love one whom he has not seen?

Tell your little seven-year-old that his uncle who has lived in America for twenty years and more, will visit you next summer. He asks, "Is he a good man?" "Yes, very." "Is he rich?" "Yes, and has built an orphanage." "Has he any boys and girls?" "Yes, and is very kind to them. And he has heard of you too, and is going to bring you an art-album, full of pictures of places in that part of the country where he lives, and wishes to

take you back with him to see those places." In a few days he says, "Father, when is uncle coming? I should like to see uncle." The child has begun to love his uncle whom he has never seen, but whose character has been described to him. And cannot a child learn to love an unseen Friend beyond the sky as well as beyond the sea? Verily he can. I know a youth of about eighteen who is a diligent and reliable Sunday School worker. When he was a child, a little under three years old, suffering from a severe attack of inflammation of the lungs, the doctor said he could not recover. Then checking himself, he said: "There is no *human* possibility of his recovering." But God raised him up. He learned to walk the second time. Bible stories were his great delight in his sickness. After returning home from chapel the first time he was able to attend, after his long and tedious illness, a frown mantled his childish brow as he looked across the dinner-table and said to his father: "You never sung this morning at chapel—

"There's a Friend for little children  
Beyond the bright blue sky."

He had learned to love that Friend, and now fifteen years have gone, and his love to that Friend is stronger than ever. A child can say, "Whom having not seen, I love."

4. Again the first followers of Christ were called *disciples*, that is, *learners*. Can a child learn? Yes, much more rapidly than an adult. Josiah Henson, better known as "Uncle Tom," relates that after gaining his liberty, his son learned to read; then he said to himself: "If the boy can learn to read, I can." But he adds, "It took me a great deal longer to learn than it did the boy."

Yes, he was a generation older. It was therefore as hard again for him to learn. So it is in learning of Christ. We limit not the power of God's grace to save the aged. God could make our spring seeds grow in autumn if He wished, but spring is the proper time to sow spring seeds, and childhood is the proper time to become a Christian. The perceptive faculties are at their best in childhood and youth. The reflective faculties mature in later life. A child, therefore, is an ideal learner, hence childhood is the proper time to begin discipleship. Christ calls us to *learn* of Him. The Apostle says, *Ye have not so learned* Christ. But there is another aspect of this. Ability to learn is one thing, and it arises chiefly out of the sharpness of the perceptive faculties, which makes it easy to take in new ideas. The teachings of grace are the newest things in the world. Here alone we have the new heart, the new spirit, the new man, the new covenant, the new commandment, the new name, the new song, the new heavens and the new earth. An aged man who can readily adopt new ideas is regarded as an extraordinary person, and is spoken of as young, despite his years. Lowell greeted his old friend, Wendell Holmes, on his 75th birthday thus:—

“Yea, let the foolish legend be,  
That still declares you're seventy-five,  
You're the old Wendell still to me,  
And that's the *youngest* man alive.”

But *docility*, or willingness to learn, is another secret of successful discipleship. Although there are some aged people who are intensely desirous to learn, yet docility is an undoubted characteristic of childhood and youth, especially of a child. Of this, the adage “as teachable as

a child" is an undoubted proof. Point out to a child one of his obvious errors, and he will probably thank you. Do the same thing for the same person fifty years later, and let me caution you, don't be too sure of your thanks. What condition of salvation is there that a child cannot comply with? One says: "I have it." A child's knowledge is very limited. A Christian is one who *knows*. "This is life eternal, to *know* Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." "We *know* that we are of God." "We know that we have a house eternal in the heavens." Yes, but there was a time when Paul and John did *not* know these things; and there was a time when they began to know them. But they did not know them *before* they began to be disciples. Some men know too much. They have a knowledge that puffs up. Lord Bacon prayed, "That human things may not prejudice such as are Divine, neither that from the unlocking of the gates of sense, and the kindling of a greater natural light, anything of incredulity or intellectual night may arise in our minds toward Divine mysteries." The first disciples, to whom the deepest spiritual truths had to be revealed, were of simple child-like minds. Referring to them, the Saviour said: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto *babes*." God astonishes us by declaring that "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings He ordains strength." Given the child-like mind, and the knowledge will soon be imparted. "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." "They shall all know Me, from the *least* of them unto the greatest of them." On how small an amount of knowledge of the Holy can we *begin* to be disciples? How

much did the Philippian jailer know of Christianity when he believed to the saving of his soul? Possibly he as well as the "prisoners" had overheard Paul and Silas singing hymns in the midnight hour. Excepting this, he had heard no Gospel sermon but that of Paul, which, I take it, is summed up in: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." That was enough to *begin* on. A child of seven, in a catechumen class, knows as much as that. Under an oak tree in Roundhay Park, I saw some seedlings coming up. They were not above an inch and a half above the black soil. An ordinary tea-cup would have held soil enough for one of them to grow in for a few weeks. But in 100 years, the developed tree would require, perhaps a quarter of an acre of soil. So a child may *begin* to be a Christian on a small stock of knowledge, then he will *add* to his faith, knowledge. The child is in every respect capable of becoming a real Christian, yea, more, childhood is the proper time to begin Christian discipleship. When the Christian Church fully realises this, the golden age will have dawned.

**II. THE CHILD-MIND IS THE TYPE TO WHICH THE ADULT MUST CONFORM IF HE WOULD ENTER INTO THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.** If God had hedged His salvation about with such conditions as only philosophers could comply with, then truly children and child-like men would have been shut out. It is just like God to make the conditions such as the poor and those of tender years can meet. A man must put aside his great attainments and his social status at mercy's gate. To confess oneself a know-nothing, is the only sure way to become wise. Lowliness of heart fits one to receive divine illumination. "Learn

of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your soul." Naaman had "thought" too many things, which he imagined the prophet would do. He knew too much. If child-likeness had characterised his mind more, his flesh would have become like that of a little child sooner. Let the full-grown make up their mind to become like a little child:—

1st. *In teachableness.* "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," Samuel was advised by Eli to say when God called to him. It was after this Samuel began to know the Lord; and when an aged man he remembered all that he had learned as a child, and exclaimed, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to *hearken* than the fat of rams." Whosoever is willing to do His will shall come to understand the Divine teaching. Even an infuriated persecutor soon becomes an apostle when, with docility of heart, he cries out, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do."

"All round about our feet shall shine  
A light like that the wise men saw,  
If we our loving wills incline  
To that sweet life which is the Law.

So shall we learn to understand  
The simple faith of shepherds then,  
And, clasping kindly hand in hand,  
Sing, 'Peace on earth, good-will to men.' "

2nd. *In trustfulness.* The Saviour encourages us to this by reminding us that God is our Father. He yearns for the return of His prodigal child. The wayward boy thinks his father will be harsh; and only intends to ask a servant's place. The father makes a feast to welcome

him homie. Such is the immortal word-picture! He reminds us that in God's eyes a man is much better than a sheep—better than the flowers—better than the birds. So dear are we to God that by Him the very hairs of our head are numbered. What encouragement to trust His love. He appeals to paternal instinct. “If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give good things,”—His Holy Spirit, and all that follows in His train—to them that ask.

A pleasure party was in the Trossachs of Scotland. One of them espied lovely flowers growing deep down on the side of the fissure of a rock. Their beauty made him long to have them. He called the attention of one of his friends to them, who urged him to think no more about them, as they were beyond his reach. Observing a little boy, he said: “If one had this rope around that boy's body, he could easily reach them.” He offered the boy a shilling if he would help him thus to secure the flowers. The child hesitated. “Suppose the rope should break; or he lets me slip—then—and yet, I'd like to earn the shilling.”

“Come, my boy, make up your mind. Will you earn the shilling or not?”

“I'll tell ye what I'll do, sir.”

“What?”

“I'll get the flowers for you if you'll let my father hold the rope.”

“Oh, but I suppose your father is a long way off.”

“No; he's only just there, in that field.”

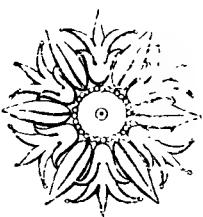
“Run and fetch him.”

The little fellow, nearly out of breath from running,

comes trudging beside his father; who learns the proposal. Well pleased, the boy descends the chasm, and plucks the coveted flowers, and is drawn up safely again, and never dreamed that any harm could befall him while his father held the rope.

So let us trust our Heavenly Father, and then we shall enter into that kingdom which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Here is the gateway: "*Become a little child.*" Childhood is the

“Dear harmless age ! the short, swift span,  
\*           \*           \*           \*           \*  
An age of mysteries which he  
Must live twice that would God’s face see ;  
Which angels guard, and with it play—  
Angels ! which foul men drive away.  
How do I study now, and ecan  
Thee more than c’er I studied man,  
And only see through a long night  
Thy edges and thy bordering light !  
Oh for thy centre and mid-day !  
For sure that is the narrow way !”



## VICTORY AND ITS REWARD.

By REV. R. HARRISON.

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“To him that overcometh, to him will I give of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it.”—REV. ii. 17.

THERE was much in the churches of Asia Minor worthy of commendation and imitation. Of the Church at Pergamos it is said, “I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is; and thou holdest fast My name and hast not denied My faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth,” chap. ii. 13. Thus amid much spiritual decay of faith and many conditions alien to Christian life, some maintained their integrity and faithfully followed Jesus Christ. Singular for His sake they might seem to be in their non-conformity to their environment. But trusting in the promise of God, with fixed purpose to honour Him, they gave up themselves to endure and suffer. They were lights in the darkness, witnessing for truth and purity even where Satan’s seat was. The Divine Name which

they held fast was to them the charter of their liberties and the badge of their Christian life.

Their attitude towards evil and patient endurance of suffering for the truth's sake mirrors ours. Any other would imperil faith and weaken our spiritual life.

The Christian faith is naturally antagonistic to evil of every kind and in every stage of development. It takes no note of where or by whom it is held and taught. It is equally opposed to it in Christian believers and the unbelieving. The Divine frown rests upon it always, and in all its phases. Time and circumstances cannot alter or change the nature of evil. Light and darkness are everywhere opposed. So are truth and error, vice and virtue, and Christ and Satan.

To be invincible and immovable in the fight and work of faith is the right relation of the Christian believer. Any other is full of peril to faith and piety. Resistance to and protection from evil come of the purity of his life and testimony. These assured he is safe. His foes, his fears, and the difficulties which beset him are subordinate to an all-conquering trust in Christ. To him are given the hidden manna and the white stone and the new name. The conqueror is crowned and honoured, while the unbelieving is condemned and dishonoured. How this is so we shall see as we consider (1.) the evils which are to be overcome, and (2.) the reward of overcoming them.

#### I. CONSIDER THE EVILS TO BE OVERCOME.

Purity of the Christian's life and character constitute his greatest protest against the evils that surround him. Conformity to the will of God is the source of personal

power over sin. As he is like or unlike God, so is he strong or weak in the presence of the world. And this will determine his attitude to the varied moral forces around him.

Hence it is of small concern to us whether these seven letters were addressed to the angel or minister of the Church personally, or through him to the Church collectively—the truth is with equal force pressed upon us that we must fight the good fight of faith, each for himself. Our relations to the forces of evil which are working against Jesus Christ are clear. We must resist and overcome. Standing for Jesus in the world we cannot sustain a neutral position. We must be for Him or against Him. Espousing His cause constant conflict is ours. The condition of human society and life makes this inevitable and abundantly illustrates it. There must be no relinquishing of trust, patience, hope, or duty in this warfare. The Name must be held fast and faith maintained in all seasons of suffering and service. Till the crown is on our brow, conflict is inevitable—then victory and rest are ours. While this side the pearly gates, dangers beset our pathway.

There were two evils in the Church at Pergamos, against which the members were to contend and overcome—*false teaching and immoral life*. The connection of creed and conduct is close and vital. In morals it is axiomatically true that belief of that which is false cannot produce a high state of spiritual life and purity. The relation of these is plainly implied in the charge against the Church at Pergamos:—“Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat

things sacrificed unto idols and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate," verses 14, 15. Thus God shows how that which is false in teaching is hateful to Him, as history illustrates abundantly how it eats away piety and prosperity from the Church. It is fatal to spirituality, and its influence is pernicious and polluting wherever it is allowed a place. Like a cancer it spreads to the very roots of the spirituality of the soul. The health, fruitfulness, and beauty of the religious life do not remain long after the poison has found its way into the Church of Christ.

"Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam—the doctrine of the Nicolaitans." What these doctrines were may not easily be determined. One thing is certain—they were hateful to God. The Jews have a tradition to the effect that Balaam taught Balak, by the institution of idolatrous sacrificial feasts, he might entice the Israelites to fornication, and thus corrupt them. We do not understand that what was taught was arranged as a system of doctrine, but as maxims to be accepted and practised.

Clearly then "the doctrine of Balaam" struck at the basis of religion by inculcating false views of God. In varied ways this doctrine is held. Much depends upon our conception of God and His relation to the world, whether our moral and spiritual life is strong or weak—growing or decaying. This fact gives vital interest to the intellectual movements and developments of these times in their relation to religion. In principle and result many much-praised theories are identical with the doctrine of Balaam.

This heresy displaced Deity as the supreme and only God of Israel, and ranked Him with the gods of other nations. It was not a denial of His existence, but a displacement of Him as the absolute Ruler of the people and object of worship. He is not one among many, but the only One to love, worship, and serve. Let it be otherwise with God in our conceptions, and we instantly endanger the foundations of morality. As He is to us, so will the standard of life be to us—abiding and spiritual as God Himself is, or uncertain and false. If we relinquish our belief in the personality of God, what authority is there that can demand from us unreserved obedience, or what principle of unity can there be in human life? Man must have a centre—and that centre must transcend all his thought of himself and the things around him. Hence pantheism is as false and disastrous as rank atheism, seeing it denies God's personality by exalting all we see, hear, and touch into integral parts of His being. The immanence of Deity in all things is credible, but to confound the Creator with the things created is an error fraught with fatal consequences. Nature is God, we are told, and if it is so, then God is nature, and therefore there is no difference, and no Personality. Nature is not the medium of revelation—but all that we may and can know of God. Such teaching—and we have much of it in these days—“does cruel violence to every better instinct of our nature, outrages all demands of religion and government, whether human or divine, and makes itself the direst foe of human progress and well-being.”

Closely allied with doctrines which degrade God by confounding Him with the things which He made, are those which divide His authority and prerogatives with

man. They are like a stumbling-block to true spiritual life and progress. Sometimes these are so conveyed as to lead the unthoughtful astray. They are taught in some quarters under the cover of priestly sanction and at the command of the Church. If pantheism annihilates God by denying His personality, Romanism robs Him of His glory, exalting mere tradition into equal authority with His Word in matters of faith and practice. The history of modern Europe affords abundant proof that, in proportion as the dogmas of the Romish Church have prevailed, the principles of morality have had but little sway either in governments or the daily life of the people. That there have been honest and upright people —nay, eminently holy persons—who have professed faith in the Romish creed we gladly admit. That there are such now we rejoice to know. But the purity of their life was independent of, and found another source other than the dogmas they believed. Other influences unknown to them have operated on their mind and heart and made them disciples indeed, in whom there was no guile. While a man may be better than his creed, or worse, a false creed can never make him good or keep him pure. Doctrine serves to purify the thought and guide the life. If it fail to do this, then it is because it is false, or man does not really accept it as the regulating principle of his being. If we may be fairly good with a bad creed or without one at all, it is impossible to say how much better we might be with a good one.

It is evident that some in the Church at Pergamos had been carried away by the tide of error which had set in among them. The Church had compromised herself with those who had taught the doctrine of Balaam. She

had allowed the weeds to grow, and much of the good seed was being choked. The Church that suffers unscriptural teaching to spread, poisons its spiritual life. Latitudinarianism often becomes license, and then liberty is the worst of bondage. The Galatians who began in the Spirit were ending in the flesh, because they had believed “another gospel which was not another gospel.” Their history has been frequently repeated.

Because we are very much what we believe, we should prove all things and hold fast that which is good. The truth makes us free, so that we are not in bondage to any man. It is the truth and not the mere human formulation of it that saves us. To the latter we may be indifferent, but to the truth itself we cannot without suffering loss. He who is careless of what he believes will not be very careful how he behaves. Some have believed a lie that they might live a lie; others have reversed this order by falling from grace and formed a creed consonant with their conduct. In this letter to the Church at Pergamos, there is first the false teaching believed, and then the life of sin.

Is not this order the common one? Have we not known persons drift from Jesus Christ and the Church just as they have cast aside the well-tried truths which they once believed? They, perhaps, thought they had outgrown the creed of their early days, and the faith once delivered them by the saints lost its hold upon them. The increasing discoveries of science together with the disturbing speculations in philosophy and assertions of the higher criticism weakened their attachment to religion. The trend of unbelief is away from God and not toward Him.

Personal knowledge and observation fully warrant this conclusion. We have seen those who were once diligent in religious work, devoted, spiritual, become indifferent to the claims of Christ, irreverent in God's house, and negligent of the means of grace. The cause of the change was the change of their creed. Sacred truths were tampered with, criticised, and eventually cast aside. Too often the loss of a good conscience follows the shipwreck of faith. The transition from believing the truth to the doing what the truth forbids, is as easy as it is short. To be "led away with the error of the wicked" is to fall from our steadfastness in Christ, (2 Pet. iii. 17). We cannot continue in a high state of spiritual life and usefulness if we lightly regard or deny the cardinal doctrines of the Christian Faith. If "fornication" was the inevitable fruit of "the doctrine of Balaam," evil in life cannot but follow the false in teaching. For the law which binds together thought and action is always the same.

For the sake then of purity of morals and the sanctity of life we must hold fast the form of sound doctrine. We must contend for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints—"the truth as it is in Jesus." It is not for the tradition of the Church, but for the truth of Christ we fight; Christ and not ceremony; righteousness and not rites—for the spiritual and abiding.

## II. CONSIDER THE BLESSINGS PROMISED TO THOSE WHO OVERCOME.

The conflict with evil in teaching and life is necessarily a *personal* one; and the promise of the blessing is of a personal character and made on the condition that we

conquer the evil. As individuals we must resist, each for himself, the allurements and encroachments of the world, the flesh, and the devil. To *him* that overcometh is given the hidden manna and the white stone and the new name.

But what do these words mean? No single interpretation is altogether satisfactory. We may, however, adopt one that may be warranted and helpful—one that may include many shades of their true import. We take it that the hidden manna is *God's promise of help*; the white stone signifies *the honour which He confers upon the Christian victor*.

1. *Then God will sustain the Christian in his contention against sin.* His need is met by God's gift of the living bread—Jesus Christ.

“Then the Lord said unto Moses, Behold I will rain bread from heaven for you.” This gift of manna was typical of the relation of Jesus Christ to the soul of man. Of the manna in the wilderness each person received his portion daily—so that as was his day so was his source of strength. The memorial of such provision was laid up in the golden pot in the holiest of all unto all generations. (Exod. xvi. 4, 32-35; Heb. ix. 4). Our Lord, in John vi., shows how He is to His disciples, and more, what the manna was to the children of Israel. In His unfailing presence He strengthens them with strength in the inner man. Every grace finds its renewal and increase in the soul in the revelation of Christ by the Holy Spirit. He is the portion of meat in due season.

“Hidden manna,” and unknown Name, except to those

who receive them by personal experience. Bread it is of which the world knows nothing. We must taste if we would see, for as Lord Bacon says, experience is the test of truth. Christ is spiritual food for spiritual people. Faith is to them the faculty by which He is appropriated. "If any man eat not My flesh, and drink not My blood, he hath no life in him. If any man eat of the bread I shall give him, he shall never die." He is the source of spiritual life and its constant support and increase. By following Him we overcome the world, and to His followers He reveals Himself in His manifold relations to them, enabling them to do all things through the strength He imparts. Through His love they are made more than conquerors.

None know this so well as those who are out and out for Christ—ever warring against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places. To the unbelieving their continuance in well-doing is little less than a mystery. They endure trials, temptations which overcome many; they carry burdens which crush others into the earth, they conquer enemies before which many have fled or fallen. "Cast down, but not destroyed; persecuted, but not forsaken." Unsoured by sorrow, and fearless in danger, they are a wonder unto many. How is it? They eat the hidden manna and are strong. Prayer and faith place at their disposal the fulness of God. Asher's blessing is theirs—as thy day so shall thy strength be; as is also Paul's experience, "Having obtained mercy, I continue until this day." Jesus is the

"Source of my life's refreshing spring,  
Whose presence in my heart sustains me."

Faith and obedience bring the Divine Presence into the soul. “Every duty done leaves the eye more clear, enables gentler whispers to reach the ear, every brave sacrifice incurred lightens the weight of the clinging self which holds us back; every storm of passion swept away leaves the air of the mind transparent for more distant visions; and thus by a happy concord of spiritual attractions, the helping graces of heaven descend, and meet the soul intent to rise.”

2. But Jesus Christ not only sustains the soul in the conflict against sin, *He honours and crowns the conqueror*. “I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written which no man knoweth but he that receiveth it.” Of this symbolic language there is a variety of interpretations. With some, the “*white stone*” stands for the glorified body, priestly dignity, the glory of victory; and others hold that it refers to acquittal in judgment. By some the “*new name*” is God’s name; others regard it as signifying the state of consecration to God—the name of the Son of God; while others think it is significant of the name of the victor, which is given as a pure expression of the new or heavenly life, as opposed to the old name of self and shame. Of all attempts to explain the figures, the least satisfactory is that which finds their meaning illustrated by the heathen custom of acquitting or condemning according as either a white or black stone was given to the accused, referred to in Dryden’s lines:—

“A custom was of old, and still obtains,  
Which life or death by suffrages ordains;  
White stones or black within an urn were cast;  
The first absolves, but fate is in the last.”

The symbolism of the Aaronic priesthood provides a much more likely solution. God, in many ways, showed to the Hebrews that they were His people—His peculiar people too. They were called by His name—the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The High Priest wore a mitre which bore upon it “a plate of pure gold” with the words “graven like the engravings of a signet—Holiness unto the Lord.” It was to be upon Aaron’s forehead that he might bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts, and “it shall be always upon his forehead that they *might be accepted before the Lord.*” (Exod. xxviii. 36-38).

The writer of the Apocalypse was, in thought, moving among the symbolism of Mosaism and found in it illustrations of Christian truth. The new dispensation is distinguished by a New Name—graven upon the new heart. Believers in Christ are kings and priests to God, and bear His name as they enter into fellowship with the Father. We ask and receive through or in His name. Consciences cleansed from dead works, and hearts made pure, have written thereon the name of Jesus. It is thus that we take it with us as the assurance of our acceptance, and the pledge of all spiritual benediction. It is the source of the brightest light, sweetest music, and the deepest peace.

“The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.” Yes, no man knows the name but he who has overcome, by God’s grace, sin and the devil. No man can know it but he who has it in all the wealth of its meaning. It may be read, sung, preached, but experience alone can make it known to us. Its true place is in the affections of the heart made clean by the blood of Christ. Flesh

and blood cannot reveal it unto us. The victory of faith makes it ours.

It is the surest of all names, for it “endures unto all generations.” Rollin tells us that Ptolemy Philadelphus commanded Sostratus to erect a tower on the island of Pharos near Alexandria, costing one hundred and eighty thousand pounds. It was a beacon for mariners amid the shifting sands. It was one of the seven wonders of the world, and the architect wishing to immortalise himself, had his name cut deep in the hidden marble of this costly column. His master’s name was graven in the plaster which covered his own. In time the covering had gone, leaving the name of Sostratus in the enduring stone. The hidden name abides.

“His name shall endure for ever.” Written on the white stone—pure heart—it shall be through all time the charm of human fear, and the solace of human sorrow. It is given to those who overcome themselves, by a complete surrender to God. These are His and He recognises them as such. Confessing Him before men they are by Him confessed.

Receiving this Name we are exalted into the highest society—the fellowship of prophets, apostles and martyrs. This is our title and passport to the best—for all things are ours. What honour! What glory!

It comes to the conqueror. Overcoming evil and increasing in spiritual life we receive strength—“grace and glory”—being fed with the hidden manna, and honoured by the presence of Jesus Christ. Honour, glory, immortality, eternal life, are for the faithful. They shall receive the crown that fadeth not away.

“See, the ransomed millions stand,  
Palms of conquest in their hand ;  
This before the throne their strain :  
‘ Hell is vanquished ; Death is slain ; ’  
Blessing, honour, glory, might,  
Are the Conqueror’s native right ;  
Thrones and powers before Him fall ;  
Lamb of God, and Lord of all.”



## UNSPOTTEDNESS.

BY REV. D. S. PROSSER.

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“Without spot.”—2 PETER iii. 14.

THE Apostle’s eyes are fixed upon the issues of Creation and Redemption. He is directing the thought of those to whom he writes to the outcome and consummation of the Divine idea in the creation of Matter and of Man.

“In the beginning God created” :—when His six days’ work was ended, He said of everything, “it is very good.”

So by the exercise of Omnipotence, was the economy of Time begun : so by the exercise of the same Almighty-ness will it end : the Day of Man shall give place to the Day of God : “the Heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” But this is not *destruction* ; Peter terms it “dissolution,” (v. 11) call it, if you will, transformation, renovation, change, any such designation is appropriate, for ‘tis not the relegation into nothingness of that which *was* ; and, amid the mystery of time’s dread fruition, we may be assured the results will harmonise with that perfect law of evolution, which characterises God’s universal

and eternal Rule; hence the language of the Apostle, (v.13), "Nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." At the end, even as "in the beginning," God shall be able to say of everything, "it is very good."

In the verse of the text, Peter urges the supreme interest of believers in this solemn event; he insists upon the influence its recognition and anticipation should have upon their character and life: "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of Him, in peace, without spot and blameless."

"THESE THINGS"—are to be "looked for;" their truth and certitude are to be apprehended; they are to be present in thought and memory; their reality and moment are to regulate and control the character and life.

The Judgment, is to be regarded as the consummation of TIME: it is the end of the *probation of the Race*, even as Death is the end of the *probation of the Individual*; and our great aim should be to so live, that God's design in us may be fulfilled; and that, in His day of Manifestation and Revelation, we may be found "without spot and blameless."

Let me invite you to think of this Divine Purpose—OUR SPOTLESSNESS. This, as we have said, was God's purpose in the Creation of the Race: Adam was made in His image, the elements of which were "Righteousness and true Holiness." This condition was to be retained by willing, loving obedience—it was to be preserved and strengthened by exercise, and the conquest of such temptation as was necessary to test its loyalty and virtue, until, by the continuity of usage, it should attain to a

permanence of perfectness which should place it above the influence of trial, and beyond the possibility of fall.

The sad result we know. The fact of the Fall is not only declared in Scripture, it is proclaimed in universal History, illustrated in daily observation, and testified, to the individual conscience, with a clearness and force from which we cannot escape : “ we have sinned and come short of the Glory of God.”

Sin has entered into the realm of Human Life. It is an alien and irritating element. It violates the harmony of Being. It abrogates Peace from the Soul. How significant of this are many of the words by which we designate sin and suffering, evil and vice. What a number of such words begin with “ *de* ” or “ *dis* ” ; prefixes which signify separation from, or conflict with, the root idea of the words to which they are conjoined. We think of a chord in music, but discord is the violation of the harmony, that which is opposed, which breaks in upon and ends the melody. This is one illustration of many ; thus Sin is discord, disintegration, disorder, derangement, distortion, disruption, deformity, distemper, disease.\* All these terms illustrate and emphasise a common truth : Sin has disturbed and destroyed the harmony of our Nature ; it has introduced foreign and conflicting elements which are fatal to our peace.

Take, e.g., the last of these words—“ **DISEASE.** ” Sin is unhealth, an abnormal condition, the derangement, the disturbance of those relations which secure harmony ; it is literally “ *not ease* ” ; ease, being dependent upon the

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\* *Vide* Bushnell’s “ *Nature and the Supernatural*, ” end of Chap. VI.

health of the system, the harmonious co-ordination of all its parts and elements ; hence the teaching of the Book, "there is no peace, saith my God, for the Wicked," and again, "the Wicked are like the waves of the sea, driven to and fro and tossed."

The disease, which is especially used in Scripture to symbolise sin, is Leprosy, an affliction so fully described, that we are all familiar with its outward manifestation, its loathsomeness, and fatality. The eruption was the evidence, the result of impurity in the blood. So actual sin is the evidence of a depraved nature : sin has its seat in the *heart* : it must be *within*, before it shows itself *without* : "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (Mark vii. 21).

Of this moral Disease, man is sensible. To love God and our Brother ; to honour a perfect Law ; to return good for evil ; to be meek and unselfish ; to be true to our own highest ideal, is not natural to us. Self-government ; loyalty to truth and holiness, demand effort : our *good* is not spontaneous ; and the consciousness that this is so, prevents that "harmony of being," which is essential to happiness.

Man is SELF-CONDEMNED. He may fear no tribunal of his Fellows ; he may stand exempt from the jurisdiction of any human code ; but, in the very citadel of *His Self-hood*, he pleads *guilty*, when the standard is his own conception of duty and right ; and, while this is so, the rhythm of his life is broken, the harmony of his Being is jarred ; there is a sense of "*Spottedness*" which depresses him, and with this discord within, he yearns and strives for Peace in vain.

YES, IN VAIN. No effort, no struggle of his own, avails. To the dread question of Inspiration, “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his spots?” the experience of all the Generations of men has but one answer; a sad, despairing, No. The declaration of God by the Prophet, “Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before Me” (Jer. ii. 22), finds endorsement in every human heart.

Yet, man has an *imperative demand*; he demands to be happy, to be at peace; this sense of moral disintegration must cease; this dissonance with right must end; I must have *self-approval*; I must be brought into harmonious, sympathetic relations with Myself and God.

For this condition to be attained I must be put *right with my Past*; I must have eliminated from my Nature that disintegrating element which makes discord and causes disease. I must have, in place thereof, a principle which, dwelling within, and controlling all my powers, will enable me, not only to refrain from evil, but will bring me into loyalty to Holiness and God.

But, alas, I am helpless. I cannot recall; I cannot undo the Past; it is irrevocable; the things that “*are*” cannot be made as though they “*were not*.” It required a miracle to make the Shadow go back on the Dial of Ahaz; but not even a Miracle can unsay the spoken word, or undo the accomplished deed; “the past has gone from us forever; it is gathered in and garnered, it belongs to us no more.”\* The blurs and stains which mar and violate the Soul we can neither *efface* nor *erase*; there is not

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\* Jerome.

water enough in the Seas of Earth or in the Clouds of Heaven to wash white the Spirit from a spot of sin.

Shakespeare, the greatest uninspired Revealer and Delineator of Human Nature, true to the facts and experience of life, makes Macbeth declare that "all great Neptune's ocean" will not cleanse his hand of his victim's blood; while his guilty Queen wails out her plaint that "all the perfumes of Araby will not sweeten the little hand spotted with Macduff's blood." How profound the truth that lies behind and within these utterances. The Past has in it the elements of finality and perpetuity. Pilate may wash his *hands*, but 'tis in vain, the guilt is on his *soul*; his *conscience* is stained and spotted; the water avails him not. The Past is *irrevocable*.

And even were it possible to "*put right the Past*," this, alone, would not suffice. There would still be "*lack of power to retain the unspottedness secured, and render loving obedience to a perfect Law*." Yet this is man's imperative need; nothing else, nothing less, will secure him peace; he must be reconciled with his Record; he must be brought into relations of harmony and fellowship with his Creator, Father, God.

And, blessed truth, impossible as is this, by personal effort, or by any human sympathy and help, the Text teaches us that "*IT CAN BE*;" *can be so* fully and perfectly; that the Spirit, thus spotted, may be cleansed; the nature, thus depraved, renewed; the whole Being, thus in dissonance with holiness, brought into perfect union therewith; so that the forgiven and regenerated one shall be found at last, when scanned by the eye of Omiscience, searched and probed by the Infinitely Wise and Holy Judge, "*without spot and blameless*."

Such are the possibilities of our nature, such are the potentialities of Redemption, such is to be the triumph of Divine Wisdom, Love and Grace.

HOW CAN GOD BE JUST AND YET THE JUSTIFIER OF THE UNGODLY? This has been the great Problem of the Divine Government since “Sin entered into the World and Death by Sin;” and this Problem is solved in the gift and work of our Lord Jesus Christ:—

“Here the whole Deity is known,  
Nor dares the creature guess,  
Which of the Glories brighter shone,  
The Justice or the Grace.”

A PRIORI—had we lacked direct Revelation, some solution of this supremest Problem of Sin and Redemption, might have been inferred from the very fact of the Divine Perfections on the one hand, and the constitution of man, on the other.

When the Philosophy of Salvation is challenged;—when objections are raised, and difficulties are instanced; the answer remains, that the Instincts, if not the Intuitions of our nature demand that the imperative need we realise, shall be met:—nothing can possibly satisfy me, but the consciousness of *Peace* through *harmony with myself and God*. And surely, if God is Omnipotent and Good, He will appease the yearnings He Himself has put into my Being;—as the eye supposes light; the ear sound; the palate food; so the longing of the soul for absolute consonance with Righteousness, justifies the assumption, that some means will be found by which this desired and demanded condition may be attained. Thus by Inductive Reasoning may we reach the same ground

as that we occupy, when we accept the Scripture story of God's mercy and Christ's redeeming Love.

We may "be found WITHOUT SPOT." This figure (spot) necessarily stands associated with the idea of *Sacrifice*. From the first, purity was essential in the Victims put upon the Altar:—such Victims must be, "*without blemish*";—physically perfect.

The Lamb was the most frequent offering, because of its innocence, its meekness and purity;—the first name by which Peter had heard Christ designated was "LAMB," when the Baptist hailed Him on the Banks of the Jordan, crying "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the World." We are told "He offered Himself 'WITHOUT SPOT' to God." Referring to False Prophets and Teachers (in the preceding chapter) the Apostle terms them "spots and blemishes" (ii. 3):—thus this condition of "UNSPOTTEDNESS," which he urges his Readers to seek and secure, it is evident, is to be realised through the work, and merit, and grace of the "SPOTLESS ONE," even Jesus Christ.

NOW CONSIDER HOW REDEMPTION MEETS THIS IMPERATIVE NEED OF MAN, AND SECURES FOR HIM THIS MORAL AND SPIRITUAL PERFECTION.

By INCARNATION, Christ identified Himself with our Humanity, "forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same" (Heb. ii. 14):—His voluntary death, suffered in sympathy and love for man, was accepted, by virtue of His Divinity, as *vicarious and propitiatory*, by God;—and, the *acceptance, and embracing* of Him, as *Sa-*

*viour and Lord*, secures Pardon of Sin;—Renewal of Nature;—Conformity of the Will to God's holy Law;—Grace and the indwelling of the Sanctifying Spirit, by which the Renewed nature is sustained, nourished, strengthened, and matured; until, by continuity of development, from Grace to Grace, from Glory to Glory, that *ideal state, without spot*—is attained and retained, and, by exercise, increased for evermore.

The Atonement has been well defined as, “*the voluntary substitution of the Sacrificial chastisement of Christ, for Man's punishment for sin*” Human sin was not transferred to Christ, as though He Himself had sinned; no sense of Personal demerit, entered into His suffering:—but, out of a Wondrous and Incomprehensible Love, in which (through His dual nature) the Human and Divine were mysteriously and inexplicably blended;—by Identification of Himself, in sympathy with the sorrow and suffering, the pain and penalty of sin, “He gave Himself for us;”—and, “tasting death for Every Man,” He “redeemed us by the blood of His Cross.”

The GENUINENESS, the SUFFICIENCY, the DIVINITY of the Atonement of our Lord, as thus taught in the Revealed Word, are proved in Human Experience. True the Past is irrevocable; but Pardon, through Christ by faith, frees from condemnation and guilt; the memory of failure and sin, serve to continually remind us of the mercy of which we are the subjects; while the Love through which we are saved becomes our Glory and Joy—the Inspiration of our Love in return—“We love Him because He first loved us,” and His love is our theme on Earth and will be our ceaseless theme hereafter:—

“*Salvation shall be all our song,  
Through Heaven's Eternal day.*”

Further, we are conscious of the *implantation in our nature of a New Principle*, by which alienation from Holiness is ended, no longer are we unable to render obedience to a Perfect Law ; “old things are passed away, and behold, all things are become new,” and thus, forgiven, renewed, pardoned, purified, born again, born of the Spirit, life becomes growth, training, progress to perfectness ; so with lip and heart, we can lift the song of the Apocalypse : “ Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us Kings and Priests unto God and His Father : to Him be Glory and Dominion, for ever and ever, Amen ; ” or with Wesley, we can sing :—

“ Covered is my unrighteousness  
Nor spot of guilt remains on me,  
While Jesu’s blood through earth and skies,  
Mercy—free, boundless mercy—cries ! ”

Yes ! such is the purpose of God, in the Work of Christ :—THE PERFECTING OF OUR HUMANITY—“ that we may be found without spot and blameless.” Weak, frail, depraved as is our nature ; spotted by the Leprosy of sin ; “ all wounds and bruises from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head ; ” yet may we be washed and purified ; the sins, though as scarlet may be white as snow, though red as crimson they may be as wool. This is a blessed truth which may be transmuted into universal Experience—it was the experience of multitudes of defiled and corrupted ones who accepted Christ under the ministry of Peter and his Brethren in the Apostolate ; thus Paul, writing to the Corinthians, enumerates the spots by which their consciences and lives had been stained ;

“fornication, idolatry, adultery, theft, covetousness, drunkenness, reviling, extortion,” and declares “such were some of you, but ye are washed, ye are sanctified” (1 Cor. vi. 9, 10)—this is the blessed experience of the innumerable Host, who are before the throne, “they have washed their Robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;” such is the blessed experience of millions, who to-day, are “living a life of faith in the Son of God;” such is our experience;—“We have Redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins,” and “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, cleanseth us from all sin.”

Blessed be God, the Love that inspired, the Wisdom that devised, the Power that effected man’s Redemption, were equal to the stupendous, glorious work—this is evidenced by those who are already within the Gates of the City, at Home in the Father’s House—it is evidenced in the experience of the militant church, whose members, having passed through the Red Sea of Christ’s atonement, tread the way of the wilderness, and nightly “pitch their moving tent a day’s march nearer home”: it will be manifest, at last, fully and forever, in that Consummation to which Peter in this Epistle looks—then Christ shall say to the Church, His Bride, “Thou art all fair, my Love, there is no spot in thee:” the Spotless Bridegroom shall take to His embrace the spotless Bride; the inviolate, inviolable Law shall declare Her free from guilt or stain; inflexible Justice shall confess Her pure; the Omniscient Infinite Judge, “whose eyes are as a flame of fire,” with Record, and Character, and Life—its every deed, and word, and thought, open to His gaze, shall proclaim Her blameless; Her Lord and Saviour, Her Redeemer King, shall present Her to His Father, “without

spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." The triumph of the Christ has come, the derangement of evil has ended, the disease of the Fall is healed, the defilement of Humanity is cleansed, the discord of the World's misery and sin is changed into the Harmony of willing obedience, and loving loyalty to Holiness and Truth; the Redeemed, (a countless Host, and we among the number), joined in the common citizenship of the Kingdom of Heaven,—while harps are struck, and crowns are cast,—uplift the anthem of Peace and Praise, which swells in sweetness and volume: until, like unto the sound of many waters, the Doxology, "Salvation unto our God which sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever," welling up from the hearts of the Ransomed, fills all the Courts and Arches of the Jerusalem which is above, and, like an ocean of rapture, beats in billows of melody upon the ears of God."

"Oh may we bear some humble part  
In that immortal song,  
Wonder and joy shall tune our heart,  
And love command our tongue."

Amen and Amen.



## GOD SEEKING FELLOWSHIP WITH MAN.

By REV. JOSEPH RITSON.

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“Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.”—REVELATION iii. 20.

BROADLY stated, the difference between a religious and an irreligious man is this: the one is in conscious union with God, the other is not. That does not imply that the irreligious man sustains no sort of relation to God. He does; he must. He cannot avoid it any more than he can avoid sustaining some relation to the atmosphere. But it is the relation of contact, not of union. The religious man is in conscious, voluntary union with God. The irreligious man is only in contact with God.

Now the Bible teaches that the great purpose of God is to change this contact into union. That is the meaning of the text, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock.” The door! What door? Every door that leads out from the self of man to the God who surrounds him on every side. You cannot go where God is not. Our whole life is bathed in an infinite life—enswathed and suffused by the infinite life of God.

With the hunger of infinite love that Divine life seeks

union with our own, standing knocking, with importunity, with infinite patience, with sleepless vigilance, at every avenue of the soul. Now one door is tried, and now another; now the intellect, now the conscience, now the emotions. The doors are many, but they are all known to infinite Love; and the order of approach is determined by an infinite wisdom. God does not approach two men in the same way; nor any man twice in precisely the same way. Has one door failed? Then another must be tried; for failure doubles the strength of the lock. Oh, yes, God knows all the doors of man's being, and He will try them all. He does not knock at one, and because there is no response give it up as a hopeless case. If the front door fails He will try the back; and so on through all the avenues of the soul. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," etc.

The teaching of the text may be elucidated by two or three questions.

#### I. HOW DOES GOD KNOCK AT THE VARIOUS DOORS OF MAN'S NATURE?

He knocks by the revelation of Himself. Man must first of all be made aware of this infinite Presence around him; and the arrangements for accomplishing this have occupied ages. There is Nature, the "original document." What is that but the Divine knocking at the soul of man? Think of the ages during which the book of Nature was being written. And is it not the unfolding of God—the revelation of an infinite Power, an infinite Wisdom? It may seem to us that comparatively few have felt that in nature God was seeking to make Himself known. But I think that is a mistake. True, very,

few have interpreted the Divine Voice as Wordsworth, the modern high priest of nature, has done. But the difference has been one of expression mainly. Multitudes in all ages have felt as did Wordsworth when he said:—

“I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean, and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man :  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things.”

But though multitudes have dimly felt that, none have expressed it so beautifully. They have heard God knocking in the beauties, the wonders, the majestic powers of nature, but vaguely, dimly ; and they remained dumb and inarticulate.

In the present age the Divine knock is heard more clearly than ever. Not only have the microscope and the telescope brought within our ken worlds of beauty hitherto undreamed of, but genius and spiritual insight have made plain what was before obscure. Is it not the province of genius to give fitting and definite shape to what others have thought but could never express? A great statesman has defined a proverb as “the wit of one and the wisdom of many.” What multitudes have perceived that men often allow to slip carelessly through their fingers at one time what at another they would give anything to possess. But it required the genius of the

author of “The Anatomy of Melancholy” to express that in the fitting and memorable words of the proverb, “He that will not when he may, when he will he shall have nay.” It seems very plain to us that Nature is the revelation of God—plain as it did not seem to the generations gone by. But why? Partly because Wordsworth has touched the book with the wand of genius, and made its chief message forever clear and plain.

And in the march of the ages we hear the Divine knocking. That God rules; that He stands behind all the changes that go on from age to age; that there is the working out, slowly yet surely, of a great purpose; that

“Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small;

Though with patience He stands waiting, with exactness grinds  
He all;”

—these are the great truths which history unfolds, and they bring home to us an infinite Wisdom, an infinite Justice, an Almighty Power.

What is the Bible but the record of the Divine knocking at the soul of man; of how He has been ever seeking to get into living union with the human spirit? It tells the wonderful story of man’s moral development, and of the varying degrees in which in the different ages he realised God. Man’s spiritual advancement is seen to be in exact proportion to his conscious union with the Divine. That is the significance of the story of Israel, of the patriarchs and the prophets.

In the New Testament we have recorded a higher stage of development consequent upon a clearer revelation of God. God came to the race in the Person of His

Son Jesus Christ. God was manifest in the flesh. It has been a work of infinite difficulty to get man into union with God. The story of God's knocking at the human soul is a story of infinite patience, of infinite mercy, and infinite love. Nothing but an infinite love could have borne with the blindness, the stupidity, the insensate folly of man.

And that love finds its highest expression in the Incarnation, the most wonderful event in the history of the world. God did come in the form of a man. He had knocked by means of the beauties and wonders of nature; by the unfolding of history; by the varied approaches He had made to patriarchs and prophets. But these were only preparatory to the revelation which, in the fulness of time, was to come in the Person of Jesus Christ. God came thus that man might see Him and know Him.

“ For Wisdom dealt with mortal powers,  
Where truth in closest words shall fail,  
When truth embodied in a tale  
Shall enter in at lowly doors.

And so the Word had breath, and wrought  
With human hands the creed of creeds  
In loveliness of perfect deeds,  
More strong than all poetic thought.”

And the foremost place in this approach of God to man must be given to the death of Christ. It was not merely that man did not know God, and required to have Him revealed; there was this additional difficulty, that in heart he was alienated from God. The great fact of *in* is to be taken into account—the greatest difficulty of all.

God is so infinitely lovely, that were it not for sin man would soon enter into conscious union with Him. Not only is the heart alienated from God, but there is the consciousness of guilt. This constitutes a double barrier between man and his Maker. Forgiveness is the first condition of spiritual advancement, and yet the sense of guilt distorts man's conception of God. God, as seen through the medium of a bad moral consciousness, is vengeful and implacable. This double difficulty is met by the Atonement, which is at once the revelation of the redeeming God—the revelation of infinite mercy and love, and also a sacrifice for human sin. Precisely how the death of Christ atones for our guilt concerns us not here. We all theorise, but the fact transcends our theories; and it is on the fact we build our hopes of salvation. Jesus died for us men and for our sins, and because He died we may enter into union with God. The Cross is the remedy for the world's evil; because it brings the world to God who alone can heal and save it. It is God's loudest knock at the soul of humanity.

And now all these are gathered up, as it were, in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In His hands is placed the great work of the administration of Redemption. As we have seen, we are enswathed by the infinite life of God; and that life seeks admission at every entrance of our nature. We have contact with the infinite at every point, but not vital union, and that is what is sought. To begin with, we possess a nature endowed with the capacity for God. We are made for God. Hence the "divine dissatisfaction" which possesses us. Hence the aspirations after something better, richer, higher, and holier than we have ever known. It is to these the Holy

Spirit makes His appeal. They make an approach to the soul possible. They lead from the self of man, and at them as doors, God stands and knocks. In a sense, indeed, they may be said to be the God within us—the insatiable hunger for our primal source. But important as these are, and infinite as are the possibilities they involve, they do not involve conscious union of the soul with God. They are the primary condition of such union, but that is all.

## II. WHAT PURPOSE HAS GOD IN VIEW IN KNOCKING AT THE HUMAN HEART?

The reason for the Divine knocking is to be found primarily in the nature of God. God is love, and love must give itself. Love is essentially self-giving, self-sacrifice. Hence the cross is the revelation of the heart of God. It is the “manifestation once in time of that which is the eternal law of God’s nature.” And herein we see the *purpose* of the Divine knocking. Because God is love He must seek to give Himself, that is He must give His own perfect nature to man, thereby making him a “partaker of the Divine nature” and a sharer of the Divine blessedness.

God has made us capable of knowing and loving Him. This is our true patent of nobility, lifting us above all the other orders of creation, so far as this world is concerned. It gives us kinship with the infinite, the eternal. But it is only a capacity, a possibility, the realisation of which has been hindered by sin. But it constitutes that by means of which we may attain the noblest destiny. At the best we are incomplete, imperfect. It doth not yet appear what we shall be; we have not at-

tained; we are not perfect. Our true ideal is in Jesus; the revelation of the perfection of the Father; and it is because God would have us realise that ideal that He comes to us knocking at every avenue of our nature.

If, however, we are to become like Him we must first of all come into conscious union with Him. We are always in contact with God, but contact is not union. Two persons may be in contact every day, and yet be at the poles asunder in sympathy and taste and feeling. God seeks to establish a conscious union with the soul. "If any man open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Clearly that implies fellowship, communion. But there can be real communion between God and the soul, only on one condition. You know on what condition two persons can have fellowship—they must be agreed. They must have points of contact and sympathy; there must be a certain community of taste and of ideal. The man of literary tastes will be able to commune with one who is like-minded with himself. So of every other taste or pursuit. The more the points of agreement, the larger will be the possibilities of communion. If then there is to be fellowship with God, there must be community of nature, in other words, moral sympathy. The first condition of this is the opening of the door. But that is only the beginning. Once the door is opened and communion established, the work of transformation proceeds apace. And the reason is clear. In fellowship soul looks on soul; spirit contemplates spirit. And such vision, such contemplation, powerfully influences the soul. The imperfect beholding the perfect is changed into its likeness. "Beholding as in a mirror the glory:

of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory." As Mæterlinck has said, "The transformation of character comes from the perception of Divinity." This perception becomes possible once God is admitted to the soul. Then He is seen, as only He can be seen, not with the eye of sense, but with the eye of the soul. He reveals Himself to the soul, which thereby grows into His likeness. And since blessedness depends on character, to realise the character of God is to realise something of His infinite blessedness; and so the purpose of the Divine knocking is accomplished.

Yet another question suggests itself.

### III. WHY SHOULD GOD NEED TO KNOCK AT HUMAN HEARTS?

Why cannot He take possession of man's being, and so enrich him with all blessedness? There we touch the heart of many mysteries. God has made man free. He is to be good by his own choice. His moral freedom is the condition of his perfection. The glorious destiny for which he has been created can only be attained by his own deliberate choice. The reason of this we can partly see. You cannot have moral quality in the absence of freedom. Unless the will is free you cannot have goodness. If it had been possible for God to have created man capable only of goodness, there would have been no more moral quality in him than in a windmill or a weather-vane.

Hence it is that God knocks at the soul of man. He will not come in unless the door is opened from within. I know there is a sense in which He does enter the soul.

He communicates by His Spirit, gracious influences, good desires, lofty aspirations.

“And every virtue we possess,  
And every conquest won,  
And every thought of holiness  
Are His alone.”

But everything of this kind prior to the opening of the door is of the nature of contact, and does not necessarily result in the transformation of character. The Spirit of God awakens in you good desires, but you are not the better for these unless there is some act of the will involved, such as will give these desires permanence, and transmute them into character. Indeed, apart from that, you are the worse for these good desires; for unless yielded to they are resisted; and that must give an additional bias to the character in the direction of evil. If God is to enter the soul so as to make it His temple, His home, it must be by the consent of the will.

To open the door is to choose Him, to choose goodness, as the Lord of our life and the law of our being. That is the essential element of faith. That is what is meant by giving the heart to God. Here, in the surrender of the will, is the turning-point of destiny. It places the soul under all gracious influences, and gives such direction to the whole man as secures that vision of God which is the condition of all nobleness, of all moral and spiritual perfection.

The question is, have you opened the door? That God has knocked is as certain as that you are living. You know it; you have no doubt of it. I speak to those who have heard the Gospel all their lives, and with whom the

Spirit of God has often striven. In varied forms, and by many avenues God has come to you—now to your reason, now to your affections, now to your conscience, now to your hopes, now to your fears. Have you opened the door? If you have not you have missed the noblest destiny God had for you. You have missed it—forever. You can never attain the height of spiritual perfection that would have been yours if you had opened the door when first God knocked.

But though you have missed the best, perchance the next best may still be yours. Again the Saviour knocks. Even now He will enter your heart and do the best He can for you. And that will infinitely transcend your loftiest imagination. Are you to lose that too? Is the “vessel” again to be marred in the potter’s hand? Surely not. Oh, seize the moment of destiny! Ere the sands in this hour-glass of opportunity run out, let your heart be melted by the loving tones of Him who knocks and waits so patiently.

“O lovely attitude! He stands  
With melting heart and laden hands:  
O matchless kindness! and He shows  
This matchless kindness to His foes.”

Will you open the door? Will you? Oh, the power of the human will! Around you play varied influences; some from heaven; some from hell. Enemies beset your path at every step; and friends watch with yearning solicitude for opportunities of influencing you for good. But amid all these influences stands inviolate the human will. Nothing can invade that sanctuary. God cannot make you open the door; and the devil and all his

angels cannot hinder you. There is something infinitely solemn and awful in the thought that every human soul holds the key of its own destiny. Life and death are in the power of the will.

“If any man will open the door.” Then you may keep it closed. Yes, and keep it closed until the power to open it is lost. Scripture and experience alike bear witness to this awful truth; he who will not, at last cannot. To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. He may knock to-morrow, but you may not hear; or hearing, may have lost, by disuse, the power to obey. Oh, then, open the door now, this moment! Then the look of wistful yearning on the Master’s face shall change to one of joy—the joy of Him who sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied.



## THE TWO-FOLD LIFE OF THE CHURCH.

BY REV. T. MEAKIN.

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“The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches ; and the seven candlesticks are seven churches.”—REV. i. 20.

CANDLESTICK and star. What is their meaning? What each is we know. The former was doubtless that ornate piece of furniture, made of beaten gold, consisting of base, with upright shaft, at whose top was a lamp. From the stem sprang three pairs of branches, each branch surmounted with a lamp, seven lamps in all, which when lit must have filled the first tabernacle or holy place, where they burned, with light, and have been a thing of beauty. The star. “Those holy stars by night,” that shine and sing, and as we gaze, fill the soul with serene joy, pervading with their sweet stillness our perturbed hearts, hushing our timid fears to rest, and making us feel, though on earth, the nearness of heaven. Shine on, sweet stars, ye are to us indeed as the angels of God. Candlestick and star. How different! And yet with all their differences, nay contrasts, having one thing in common—diffusion of light. The one lighting up the Sanctuary, the other the heavens ; the one shining within, the other without ; the one at home, the other abroad. Do we not perceive in these two lights symbols of other lights,

lights spiritual and Divine, irradiating the sanctum of the heart within, and illuminating the world of duty without? “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” And why, but that we may “Let our light so shine before men, that seeing our good works, they may glorify our Father which is in heaven.” “For to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen Me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Me.” Let us then consider—

I. The inner life of the Church as symbolised by the candlestick. It burned in secret; on its light no vulgar gaze was fixed. The seven lamps seemed to say: “We shine not to be seen of men, we do not court their compliments, neither fear we their censures. We burn to irradiate with loving fondness the base and stem on which we depend, and blend our light in fellowship with one another.” Through the long lone hours of silent night, even though they did not see its light, men knew that it was there. Two things this secret light required—trimming and feeding. By day the charred portion of the wick was removed, that it might burn the brighter by night; the oil consumed by last night’s burning is replenished by a fresh supply in the morning. Is not all

this an outward figure of an inward fact? A material symbol of a spiritual experience? He who “prefers before all temples the upright heart and pure,” and “consecrates the souls of men that He may dwell therein for ever,” has lit them up with a holy flame, a flame that burns, and therefore shines—the flame of love, “the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us”—a flame that is the mastering passion, that burns primarily for God, that consecrates, constrains, consumes, and sings,

“ There let it for Thy glory burn  
With inextinguishable blaze ;  
And trembling to its Source return  
In humble prayer and fervent praise.”

As a whole is what its parts are, so is a church conditioned by its members. A church whose members glow with this pure and heavenly flame is a church illuminated, lit up, bright and beautiful and blessed.

(a) How does this love need to be tended, trimmed and supplied, lest, as in the church at Ephesus, it should abate somewhat of its first intensity, and gradually decline to the condition that obtained in Sardis and Laodicea! It needs to be trimmed with discernment, with determination, and with discipline. False teaching will char the wick and dim the flame, so we need to discriminate between the true and the false. Toleration of evil and evil doers will bring the darkness of condemnation. Who, reading the letters to the seven Churches, can fail to endorse the judgment of Professor Milligan that they are a complete type of the church everywhere and always?

At times the light has burned very low. Even the things that remained have been ready to die, but there has always been a remnant, a "few," as at Sardis, "that have not defiled their garments." This is true of the church as a whole, as it is of the particular churches in whose experience our own has participated. In the days of Luther, the light was very dim, but God raised up a band of trimmers, some of them, we are sorry to confess, trimmers in more than one sense. During the last century again the light was but dim; but in the Wesleys the lamp found diligent and faithful attendants. And who of us but can recall instances, though on a much smaller scale, when the cutting away of false teaching and evil practices has resulted in the lamp of God burning with a bright and blessed light? Neglect, that is the bane of church life. When duties are neglected, means ignored, whether by pulpit or pew, preacher or people, then the lamp burns but dim, yea, is in danger of being put clean out by its own smoke.

(b) But this love, this light requires feeding as well as trimming. The priest replenished the cups day by day. The oil of yesterday would not suffice for to-day. We need fresh supplies from God, the Being who is both love and light. In the vision that Zechariah saw there stood on either side the candlestick an olive tree from which by secret pipes the needed oil flowed. So the God of all grace is ever near to us "to supply our every need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." We find His word an unfailing source, a fountain that ne'er runs dry. Its instructions are enriching, its examples encouraging, its promises unfailing. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the

Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." There is danger that the multiplicity of books and the ever-increasing supply of papers are diminishing time and disposition for Bible reading. If that turn out so, the flame in the soul and the church will be flickering and feeble. Again, what a soul-feeder is prayer! Here we are in very near touch with God. We come before Him with our emptiness, and He fills us to the limit of our capacity. The men who have flamed like Seraphs have been men of prayer. Let it not be said, "We have no time." We had better make time. It is said that Havelock, the Lucknow hero, if he had to march at six in the morning, would rise at four rather than deprive his soul of its devotions. 'Tis true we live in busy times; life is at high pressure. What with bustle and barter men have scarce time to eat, but let us remember the words of Luther when duties were pressing thick upon him: "I have so much to do that I cannot get on with less than three hours of prayer a day."

Is not the communion of saints a time of refreshing and replenishment? May I instance that nowadays much neglected, if not even despised, means of grace—the class meeting? How often, buffeted and beaten, listening to the experience of another, have we been strengthened and stimulated! Many dislike this means because "they have nothing to say." Well, if that be so, we admit it is not easy to say it. Better say nothing than speak what is unreal. It is this unreality, we trow,

that has done more than anything to cause neglect of the class meeting. But what is the cure for this? If we have no experience to tell, all the more reason why we should get one; having got it, it will not be so difficult to relate it, lack of expression and timidity notwithstanding. The temple lamps shone one on the other. So, if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we shall have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse us from all sin.

One more means of grace we will mention is the Lord's Supper. How many there be who habitually neglect this ordinance. Some give as their reason, "They do not feel good enough." May we ever be saved from feeling *good enough* to gather at the Lord's table. The important matter is, "Do we want to be good?" If so, then here is a blessed opportunity. When do we more feel the exceeding sinfulness of sin? When do we more vividly apprehend the love of God toward us? When are we more drawn "into fellowship with His sufferings;" into "conformity with His death;" as when we gather at His table?

"Here, O my Lord! I see Thee face to face;  
Here faith can touch and handle things unseen;  
Here would I grasp with firmer hand Thy grace,  
And all my weariness upon 'thee lean."

These are some of the means by which may be conveyed the grace needful to keep the flame burning in the soul and the church. May we prize them, use them continuously, dutifully, lovingly. Thus shall we please Him for whom we live; thus shall we comfort one another.

II. Shall we now consider this light in its outward active condition as symbolised by a star? The seven stars are the seven angels. Angel means messenger, and messenger implies movement. With this general definition, let us for the present be content. It will do us little good to curiously pry into particulars respecting them—their number, size, shape, station, for we do not know, and at present have no means of finding out. We read of angels associated with earth, air, fire, water. Why may not the active side of these elements be meant? “His messenger the stormy wind.” “Ye are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid.” He had just said, “Ye are the salt of the earth.” Lest they might conclude that as salt secretly, silently permeated the substance with its savour, so they were, like Joseph of Arimathea, or Nicodemus, who came to Him by night, to be disciples but secretly, He immediately adds, “Men do not light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that, seeing your good works, they may glorify your Father which is in heaven.” *Let it shine.* Do not vauntingly parade it, nor timidly hide it. Your duty is to see to the trimming and feeding, its nature is to do the shining. *Let it shine.* The lesson then is, if, as the candlestick in the sanctum, we burn and shine for God, as a star in the heavens we shall burn and shine for men.

It will help us to appreciate the figure if we consider a few analogies between the light of a star and that of the church. A star is

1. Beneficent. All light is beneficent. It gladdens the eye, rejoices the heart, beautifies the earth,

and makes resplendent the heavens. If it be objected that the benefit to us of a star is infinitesimal as compared with that of the sun, the answer is that what the sun is to our world, yond twinkling star may be to worlds in comparative proximity to it. What would be the condition of the world without light? We cannot conceive. Nor is the church less blessed. Its mission is to save men from sin. Salvation brings in its train blessings too great for our poor words to describe. It reconciles man to God, which makes him at peace with himself and his fellow. If his enemy hunger he feeds him, if he thirst, he gives him to drink, and thus transforms him into a friend. It shows men that to live for self is the meanest thing under God's heaven; while to live for others is to make men but a little lower than the angels, and to make earth like heaven. The church when true to herself is God's messenger, with eager feet bringing good news to men. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem. For the Lord, He hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem." Under her benign teaching—

"Men learn to see their own in all men's good,  
And join in universal brotherhood."

Under her benign influence, wounds are healing, wrongs righting, oppressions lifting, the crooked are being made straight, the rough places plain, and the glory of the Lord revealed.

2. The shine of the stars is continuous. When the

sun floods the heavens with the light of the morning, the star may seem to withdraw itself; it does not, but shines all the same, as the testimony from the bottom of mines declares. Clouds may mantle the sky, and storms sweep across it, but these do not affect the star. No rains can quench its fires, no winds blow out its flame. Seen or unseen, in fair weather or in foul, by day and by night, the star holds on its way. This is but what the church is, or will be, when she answers her design and fulfils her destiny. This is a picture of every true follower of Christ. Whether friends be few or foes many; no matter whether conditions be favourable or forbidding, love to God and loyalty to Christ will keep the flame of duty burning. "Like a steady star in a troubled sky" he will peacefully hold on his way without halt or hesitancy. His service will not be a matter of times and places, of Sundays and sanctuaries. Each day will be a Sabbath, and all places holy ground. "Whether he eat or drink, or whatsoever he do, he will do it to the glory of God." "Holiness to the Lord will be written upon the bells of the horses, and every pot in Jerusalem be as the vessels before the altar."

3. The star is impartial. It greets each wistful eye with the same kindly gleam, be it that of peer or peasant. 'Twill guide as faithfully the simple Greenland whaler as it will the stately Atlantic liner. It is no respecter of persons, but is the same star to all that gaze upon it with true and equal eye. The true Christian, individual man or collective church, regards not the distinctions of class or cash. If he have any bias at all, it will be that of his Exemplar, a leaning to the poor, despised and down-trodden. He will never come under the castigation of James for being obsequious to one because

of his long purse, and rude to another because he has no purse at all. He recognises himself a “debtor to Greeks and to barbarians ; both to the wise and to the foolish.” We are all the children of a common Father, redeemed by the same Christ, renewed by the same Spirit, and inheritors of the same heaven.

4. The star is one of that heavenly chorus, whose balanced harmony stirs the poet-philosopher’s soul :

“ In reason’s ear they all rejoice,  
And utter forth a glorious voice,  
For ever singing as they shine,  
The hand that made us is Divine.”

“ There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.” “ Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.” And oh, when the end shall come, when Redemption’s æon shall have run its course, when the last enemy shall have been destroyed, the last soul saved, when the kingdom shall be handed over to God, even the Father, may we, having shone as candlestick and star, having served Him with piety and in duty, be of that number that shall sing, “ Unto Him that hath loved us and washed us in His own blood, unto Him be honour and dominion for ever and ever.”

In concluding, let me ask, Is the candlestick burning ? If asked, “ Lovest thou Me more than these ? ” can we look into the Master’s eye and say, “ Yea, Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee ” ? He will then say, Feed My sheep. But if there be no flame in the heart, no matter how we may flare in the sky, though we be able to say, “ Lord, Lord, have we not

prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works?" He will inform us He never knew us. Let us not mistake outward work for inward worship. Do not substitute bustling duty for quiet piety. Let the star shine by all means, but not at the expense of the candlestick. These are not unnecessary warnings. Was there ever such a time as this for work? On every hand there is a going to and fro. Convocations, Councils, Conferences gathering; programmes and projects deliberated and decided; building and preaching, giving and getting; nobody can complain that the church is idle. Life in the church seems at as much tension as life in the world. All very good, providing we are not doing all our living in the open. Let us preach certainly, but we must pray too; let us work by all means, but not at the expense of worship. Be dutiful, but none the less be pious. Let the star shine, but also let the candlestick burn. Let the two-fold life, inward and outward, be lived, but the inward first. Shine in the sanctum, and we shall shine in the sky. "For they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever."



## THE GREAT RENUNCIATION

BY REV. ROBERT HIND.

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“He saved others ; Himself He cannot save.”—MATT. xxvii.  
42. (R.V.)

“He that loveth his life loseth it ; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”—JOHN xii. 25. (R.V.)

“I have been crucified with Christ ; yet I live ; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me ; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”—GALATIANS ii. 20. (R.V.)

THESE Scriptures are placed together here for the purpose of emphasising what may be called the manward aspect of the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. Beyond doubt there is a Godward aspect to this subject. The doctrine of “Substitution,” although often presented crudely, sometimes even vulgarly, has a place in the teachings of the inspired Word, especially in the sayings of Jesus Christ and the writings of St. Paul. “The good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.” “As by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One many shall be made righteous.” There are, however, not a few who whilst they accept

the doctrine confess that they do not understand it very well. It commands the allegiance of their heart, whilst at the same time it presents insuperable difficulties to their reason, and hence they are fain to cling to it by faith alone. They are confident that in some way or other Jesus “bore our griefs and carried our sorrows,” but they will not attempt to explain the “wherefore” and “how” of this great mystery. With the poet they accept the fact of the atonement, but they decline absolutely to reason about its nature.

“I cannot understand the woe  
Which Thou wast pleased to bear :  
O dying Lamb, I do but know  
That all my hopes are there.”

But there is another, a manward aspect of this subject, which is well within the limits of our comprehension. St. Paul was thinking of this aspect of the subject, and certainly gave to it a very bold and striking expression, when he wrote to the Galatian Christians the remarkable words, “I am crucified with Christ;” and the words of the text from the Gospel of St. John set forth the meaning of the Cross in this respect more vividly and forcibly than it had ever before been given to the world. “He that loveth his life loseth it; but he that hateth his life shall keep it unto life eternal.” This is the one method of salvation,—hate your own life; sacrifice it; throw it away; for only by doing this can you save it. But if Jesus expressed this truth on the occasion of the visit of certain Greeks who desired to see Him, in language at once more beautiful and adequate than had ever before been used for the purpose, it should be added that

He not only translated the truth into words as none had ever done before Him, but when He came and lived and died among men, and as He was dying refused, when challenged, to save Himself, He translated the truth not into words, but into action, as no one had ever done. Did He not at that time hate His own life; count it of no value; throw it away, for the sake of accomplishing His great purpose? He would not save His own life, because He wanted to teach men that the way to save the life is to lose it. When He yielded Himself up to death, even the death of the Cross, He revealed to the world the only way by which to attain to eternal life. Life can be saved through death alone; in other words the redemption of the soul is to be secured through self-surrender.

I. Obviously the words of mockery spoken by Christ's enemies as He was dying,—“He saved others, Himself He cannot save,” were not true in the sense in which these scoffers intended them to be understood. No man can read the gospel story with an open mind without understanding that all His work was undertaken voluntarily, and that He died because He *chose* to do it. “No man taketh My life from Me; I lay it down. I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again.” He foresaw how all would end, and had no desire that it should be otherwise. Many of His words indicate this; none perhaps more clearly than that striking saying, often overlooked as though it were of trifling import, but which is exceedingly significant in relation to this matter,—“From this time Jesus set His face steadfastly toward Jerusalem.” He was resolved that all His movements should bring Him nearer the goal He intended to reach; day by day He would keep tend-

ing towards Jerusalem,—towards Gethsemane,—towards Calvary,—towards death. Constantly he kept pressing on towards the tragic consummation, and in explanation of this purpose, said to His followers that, the traditions of Jerusalem being what they were, it would be strange if a prophet were to perish in any other place. Was He compelled thus to hurry to His end? Apart from His own will was there any power to compel Him to order His conduct in such a manner that each day brought Him nearer the Cross? He might have altered the manner of His life, so that instead of being regarded as the enemy of the chief men of the country, He would have been reckoned their friend, and instead of forfeiting the good-will of those who were His friends in the early part of His public ministry, to the end He would have been honoured by all the community. Let it be noted also that the death of the Cross did not come upon Him suddenly and unexpectedly. Often enough it has happened that some of the great and good men of the world have pursued a course which of necessity has exposed them to danger, but who will say that they were confident that the worst would happen? In by far the greater number of cases, if not in all, they have been buoyed up with the hope that the threatened evils would not fall upon them. When at last those evils have come, they have had no time, no chance, to alter their plans and save themselves. It was different, however, with Jesus Christ. He saw the end from the beginning, and with this knowledge He might, had He so willed, have avoided the sufferings of the later period of His life, and the bitterness of His death upon the Cross. It was an untrue word therefore that His enemies spoke

when they cried in derision, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save."

Even if no account be taken of His foreknowledge, and the possibilities of the hour alone be thought of, this cry of derision will still appear to be untrue. In these times much is said about the inviolability of physical law. A believer in this doctrine, looking upon the scene on Calvary, might have concluded that His enemies had conquered Him. He might have called the Prophet of Nazareth, as He was bleeding out His life upon the Cross, a beaten man. To save Himself at that moment, in the eyes of a man who accepted the doctrine of the inviolability of physical law, would have appeared an impossibility. But to those who believe, not in the reign of law but in the reign of spirit, in the supremacy of a Personal God, in the government of One who is above all physical conditions, it would have seemed a thing not incredible that He who had healed the sick, stilled the tempest, by a touch or by a word raised the dead to life, might have stepped down from the Cross, and once and for ever confounded His enemies.

Why then did He not save Himself? There were many inducements to lead Him to deliver Himself out of the hands of His enemies. To a man the exercise of conscious power merely for its own sake is a great temptation, and generally to exercise such power to save himself from suffering of any sort, but especially from shame and ignominy, or from death, will prove an inducement too great to resist. We can form no conception of the bodily agony which Christ at this moment was enduring. But in addition He had to bear the taunts of His enemies, the scorn which found expression in words like

these, "Himself He cannot save." There must have been a great conflict in the mind of the Son of God. It could not have been easy at that moment for Him to remain true to the purpose of His life. Why did He allow their challenge to seem to be well-founded? Here, beyond doubt, is the explanation, in part at least, of the nature and method of salvation. For Christ to have come down from the Cross would have been an act of self-assertion, for no other purpose than to gain a victory over His foes. But that would not have been losing His life for a great end. At no period would Jesus Christ have moved a finger, much less would He have brought into exercise His almighty power for so trivial an object. He had lived, not for Himself, but for others. And He could die for others. At this moment He saw that, in order that He might become the Saviour of men, He must renounce self. This was the reason why He greeted the challenge of His foes with silence. That silence translated into words meant, "I do not desire to save Myself, but to save you, and by this last act of self-surrender in a life that from beginning to end has been made up of self-surrender, I will teach every man whose mind is open to the truth how his salvation may be accomplished. When he dies to self in this way, he will save himself." To the men of every generation the Divine voice is speaking such words as these. From Calvary the exhortation comes to every man,—Be equal to the great renunciation—the renunciation of yourself. Hate the life that is self-centred, that is devoted to the quest of personal good. Live for God; for men. Be true to this purpose even at the risk of life. Refuse to

vaste (for so used it would be wasted) any of your strength with the mere object of serving your own interests. If you exercise upon yourself any care whatever, let your ultimate object be the service of others. Then will you have learned the first part of Christ's secret of life-saving.

II. And yet there is a sense in which the words of Christ's enemies were absolutely true. It has been shown how false they were in the sense in which they were spoken. He could have avoided that apparent defeat; He had the power to live; but to die was part of His plan. But in a sense higher than these men in their moral perversity could understand, their remark was quite true. Let it be stated in the most emphatic manner that no man can save both himself and others. The modern scientist talks about the inviolability of physical law, but here is a moral law that has always been operative, that will continue when heaven and earth shall have fled away. No one who would save others must think of saving himself. There are many beautiful illustrations of this law in realms below the moral. Jesus Himself makes use of one in connection with the passage from St. John's Gospel which stands as part of the text. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." It can be fruitful only upon the condition that it die. Take the acorn that has fallen from the oak. It is a little thing, but there are in it infinite possibilities. Plant it, and it will become a great tree, in which the birds will find a home, and whose outspreading branches will afford shelter for the beasts of the field. Other acorns grow upon this tree; they in their

turn are planted, until a great forest is produced. Where the reproduction will end, who can calculate? as a matter of fact it need never end. And all this comes from the one little acorn. But upon what condition! Take care of it; preserve it from harm; put it under a glass case, and these magnificent results will not be produced; under such conditions it will simply moulder away. "He that loveth his life loseth it." But throw it away; bury it in the ground; let it disappear; let it perish, and the forest will be produced. "He that hateth his life shall keep it unto life eternal." The forest exists, but where is the acorn? It has ceased to exist. It saved others, it could not save itself. The mother nurses her child through a long sickness, and brings back the bloom to his cheek, the brightness to his eye. But in the process she loses her own bloom and wears out her own strength. This is an absolute necessity; if she would save her child she must not think of saving herself. A politician undertakes to champion the cause of the sailor. He has powerful interests to fight; the interests of men to whom a big dividend is everything, and the life of a seaman, or for that matter, the lives of many seamen, are nothing. He labours in the day preparing statistics; he addresses meetings almost every night; he travels all over the country; he uses every possible means of influencing public opinion; he allows his good name to be dragged through the mire by men who are not worthy to fasten his shoes; he lives in a constant whirl of excitement. His strength wears out; his brain reels; reason trembles in the balance. A little rest would be the greatest bles-

sing he could have, but it cannot be obtained. If he would save the seaman, he must be prepared to perish himself. Take still another illustration. A great principle is at stake. A man has the opportunity of blessing all the men of his generation and of many a generation to come by being loyal to that principle. But if he be true, for the present he will bring himself into disrepute, estrange some of his friends, lose in his substance, and suffer in various other ways. There, then, is a clear alternative—he must either sacrifice the interests of mankind at large, bound up as they are with that principle, or sacrifice himself. He cannot save both. The Apostles recognised this, and being true followers of Him who gave His life away for men, they gladly laid all they had on the altar of sacrifice. Every great reformer has seen this issue. Let it be said in all reverence, even God, in the person of His Son, knew of no other way of saving the world. If He would save men, He must not entertain the thought of saving Himself. All Christ's life meant loss to Him. "He was rich, and for our sake became poor." It was the sacrifice of His interests; His blessedness; of Himself. But this principle found its highest expression in the Cross. What the Cross meant to God can never be told; but in its manward aspect, it was the carrying out the principle of self-renunciation for the good of others to the highest degree. The law, universal in its operation, did not go past Him; He could not save both Himself and the world, and His strong passion for man's salvation led Him to make a complete surrender in order that man might be redeemed.

III. There is a third statement to make regarding this subject. Paradoxical though it may seem, it is nevertheless true, as the text plainly asserts, that it is only by allowing self to be lost that a man can save not only others, but himself. If he does not make the surrender, but is resolved to save the poor self he now is, and the poor life he now has, he will never find the higher manhood, and the larger better life of which he is capable. Recall for a moment the acorn to which reference has been made, and the majestic tree and great forest it ultimately became, and then ask what is the true existence, the true life, the essential reality. Not the acorn surely. The essential reality is the tree, or if you will, the thousands of trees that make up the forest. The acorn, as an acorn, was not the true existence ; it had not found its real life ; it had not attained to its true condition till the acorn had perished, and the tree had grown. It is the same with the life of a man. Apart altogether from his influence upon others, his own life must remain a poor contemptible thing—as poor in comparison with what it might be, as the acorn is poor in comparison with the oak, until he die to self. Without such a surrender, he can have no true life ; he is already dead. Is not the acorn dead ? It has possibilities of life no doubt. But it has, as an acorn, only the possibilities of life, not life itself. For what are the evidences of life. There are growth, change, movement. But whilst the acorn is carefully preserved in its beautiful glass case there is no movement, no outbursting of the hidden germ, no clothing of itself with beauty. When it begins to live, it begins to die. As soon as it is put into the

ground the acorn begins to perish, in a little time there is no acorn. But it lives in other forms; forms stronger, more beautiful, and more useful. It is thus with men. Not only do they save others but themselves also, by dying for others. Supposing the man of Tarsus had never made the great surrender, but instead had looked well to his own interests, of course he would never have blessed the Gentile world, but then he would himself never have *been* the Apostle of the Gentiles, nor would he have lived the glorious life that distinguished him, or known the spiritual experience to which he actually attained. He saved himself, becoming Paul the Apostle, by giving that other poorer self, Saul of Tarsus, away. This is true of all who have lived for others. They have reached a higher experience, come into the possession of greater powers, and lived a better life. Is it not also true of the Lord Jesus Christ? No doubt here is a great mystery, but this is plain, that Jesus Christ by His sacrifice not only saved the world but *became* the Saviour. This is the mercy that is twice blessed, blessing him that gives and him that takes, the love that is the world's salvation, saving those on whom it is bestowed, and him who bestows it.

Let every man try to realise in this something of the meaning of the Cross. It was false to say that Jesus could not have saved Himself. Similarly it is possible for a man to give up his life to self-preservation and self-seeking. But if he does this he cannot hope to be, in any sense whatever, a blessing to others. If he would save others, he must forget self, and devote himself heart and soul to the cause of men. Doing this,

although the man that he once was will perish, he will come into the possession of a better manhood, and learn that even for himself,

“There is no gain, except by loss ;  
There is no life, except by death.”



